

Silent is the Vistula

THE STORY OF THE WARSAW UPRISING

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Translated from the Polish by

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SILENT IS THE VISTULA

I LOCKED THE DOOR of my apartment and hurried down the four flights, past my tobacco shop on the ground floor. I did not want to be late for the Mass at the Holy Cross Church. Not on this day.

The August sun was high in the sky even though it was early morning. A soft breeze from the Vistula eased the strain of the unslept night. So many things had to be done. I was tired, very tired, but not excited or nervous.

People were streaming up Obozna Street. Probably they were going to services, too.

The church was filled to overflowing. My old school teacher, Father "Missy," said the Mass. It was so quiet I could hear the flutter of a little bird that flew into the church. At the clear, insistent tolling of the bells people fell on their knees on the bare floor. The faces that morning were solemn, yet free from worry or fear. People were so intent on prayer one could almost hear their thoughts.

Somehow, I could not pray. Not the way I should. I looked at the statue of Our Lady and tried to tell her wordlessly what was going to happen that day. I thought of Barbarka. I hoped that she could be kept out of it all. Was it not enough that my two brothers and both my sisters and I were all in the Home Army? Living often in hiding, every day in danger, going through the grind of the Gestapo more than once, seeing death and torture so often that our minds and hearts were poisoned with it, bearing what all people of Poland had to bear these years: cold, hunger, misery and German persecution. Were we not enough? Must I give up my little girl, too?

Father "Missy" in his red chasuble turned toward us and opened his arms: "*Orate, Frates!*" he called, and

human hearts rallied at the call, lifted up in faith, in prayer and in hope

The Mass over, Andrew and Scholar joined me at the door of the church.

"Well, what are your plans for the day?" I asked.

"Don't you know?"

"Of course!" I shrugged my shoulders. "I mean, are you coming with me now? I'll give you some breakfast. Then we'll go our ways. I have a briefing at nine, anyway."

"Whew!" Scholar clucked his tongue. "Don't you sound important!"

We got to Topiel Street, and started climbing up. The house Barbarka and I lived in, second from the corner of Obozna Street that ran along the University grounds, had been through the Siege of Warsaw in 1939. It wasn't badly damaged, but the staircase had not been repaired during the past five years. In the lobby downstairs timid grass and bare earth pushed their way in between the marble blocks. At the door of my fourth-floor apartment a cunning alarm had been installed in 1942 that a stranger standing at the door could not fail to set off.

I had three rooms, small but "well appointed," as Scholar used to say. And yet we found enough space to store two field cots (which were made up to resemble a small table in the kitchen, complete with a cloth and a vase of flowers), three studio couches, two rubber mattresses that disturbed one with memories of happy pre-war canoe trips and sunny riverbanks, and finally eleven mattresses, cleverly constructed of impregnated paper. The only trouble with them was they had to be inflated every two hours or so, which did not permit a long rest, unless one preferred to sleep on the bare floor or on my Smyrna rug. Besides this bedding equipment, actually used by an amazing number of people, we had contrived a few excellent hiding places, small and large, such as

stool legs in which we kept money and valuable papers and larder shelves with invisible drawers. Such items as a container filled with some ten gallons of gasoline or a pair of bicycles had their own, though inconspicuous, corners.

My small apartment buzzed with people that morning. For three days now I had quartered thirty boys of Sergeant Zdun's unit. Zdun was tall and gaunt, with a long mustache, and hair bleached by the sun in the fields of his farm. On July 26th he had left his village to bring to Warsaw the load of potatoes requisitioned by the Germans. He was really supposed to bring it in April, but "couldn't make it." The Underground had issued an order. "Whatever you must give to the Germans, give as late as possible and of the worst possible quality, or do not give at all." Zdun, in this case, decided to give late. On July 27, 1944, he brought into Warsaw ten carts of potatoes, along with thirty boys of the Home Army, hidden in the carts. He parked them at my place which had never felt more like a can of sardines.

Andrew greeted my "guests" the way schoolboys do, shuffling his feet, his childish dimples deepening in a shy smile. But in his brown eyes there was the look of a seasoned soldier, grave and unsmiling.

"Hello, boys, how about some food?" I said.

"Breakfast for madame and her retinue!" called the Beanpole, clapping his hands gravely and assuming the duties of a major-domo.

Beanpole was straight, tall and painfully thin. He was cross-eyed and his right ear was missing. It had been chopped off by a drunken German in Duesseldorf, back in 1940, when Beanpole was in the prison camp there. The German had wanted to send the ear to his fiancée as a souvenir. During a British air raid Beanpole escaped and reached Warsaw in a pitiful state, where he joined the Underground.

"Skeleton promises us a cup of your excellent acorn coffee, madame, and four potato cakes apiece," Beanpole announced

"A seat for the lady," called Voytek, himself sprawling in the soft armchair with a copy of *The Fatal Pin*, a novel which made him burst out laughing every now and then. Voytek was my favorite. We used to study medicine together under Doctor Zoraski. Too bad, I thought, that he was assigned to a different sector on this day.

"You see what pigs they are," Voytek turned to me without budging. "You'd think they'd move for you, wouldn't you?"

Scholar moved over on the couch to make room for me. We munched Skeleton's potato cakes and talked nonsense until Zdun got up and stretched his long bones.

"Enough dawdling," he said. "Let's go."

The first group had to go to their posts in the Old Town. The second was to follow upon the receipt of this telephone message: "Maryla will be home this afternoon."

They left by threes so as not to attract attention. We heard their steps on the stairs. The next three counted fifteen before leaving.

"Good-bye, Aneri. Should anything happen, don't let us die of loss of blood. You won't spare iodine, will you?"

Now, waiting for the telephone call, Scholar and Andrew got on their knees in my room, trying to wash the floor. Scholar tried to persuade me that there is nothing like gasoline for cleaning floors. He was different from other boys. He never laughed the way others did, and yet he managed not to be melancholy. He was completely dependable and trustworthy. His wife had been killed by the Germans six months after they had been married. They caught her in a manhunt in the street when she was going home from Our Saviour's Church one morning. Scholar did not talk much. He was twenty-seven.

"Get out!" I heard Andrew's voice from my room. "I got to wipe off that dirt you left in the corner, you slacker"

"When did you get to love cleanliness so much?" Voytek drawled.

The telephone rang I felt my throat tighten. This should be the signal for the second group to leave. Slowly I reached for the receiver. My hand felt numb, as if it did not belong to me.

"Hello."

"Maryla asked me to tell you that she will be home this afternoon."

"Thank you very much"

I breathed deeply My hand became a part of me again. The numbness was gone.

The second group left then. Again good-byes and good-lucks and may-God-keep-yous.

At the gate of our house the twelve-year-old Yurek, son of the shoemaker from Browarna Street, and the eleven-year-old Yanek Solata, son of the janitor, kept guard. In case of danger, the two boys were to whistle. They shifted on their feet and looked around and were a trifle disappointed because everything seemed all right, and they could not engage in any glorious and perilous deeds.

The third group was now leaving. The last one. The kitchen was cleaned up and Scholar even finished scrubbing the floor in my room. Voytek got up, *The Fatal Pin* still in his hand.

"Hey, soldier, you going on a vacation with that book?" someone laughed.

Voytek looked hurt and puzzled by this lack of understanding.

"I'll have time to finish it on the barricade," he explained.

Only Andrew and Scholar remained. They went into

Barbarka's room to pack the hand grenades which they were to take to the post on Pieracki Street. Lying on the couch in my room, before going to the briefing, I heard the rustle of shavings. They were packing the grenades as if they were wine bottles.

Half an hour more and I, too, would have to go. I lay quietly, eyes half closed. When I shut my eyes tight, I could see Zdun's boys going to their posts. By now I knew them so well. The first two groups were walking to Miodowa Street. I could see Voytek stopping before a florist's window. He will send me red and white tulips, as usual.

I could see Sergeant Zdun, plowing ahead heavily. Every once in a while he would stop and look back, chewing on his mustache. He certainly knew how to play the role of a "dumb peasant." And there was Stashek, conspicuous in his white peasant garb, girded with the belt his grandfather had worn in the Insurrection of 1863. His black German army boots were highly polished; they used to belong to one of the many Germans Stashek had tracked down in the forest not far from his village.

I could see the third group catching "Number 16." The trolley was overcrowded. The streets were teeming with people. The third group joined with other units bound for the Brudno Cemetery, one of the most difficult sectors. But the cemetery was beautiful, with its green trees and flowers and birds—a place to die in—if you must.

Scholar came to the door of my room.

"What is it, Scholar?"

"We've finished."

"Leaving now?"

"Yes. And you?"

"In ten minutes."

"We'll see you at Uyazdov at four-thirty then."

"That's right. Good-bye, boys."

"Good-bye, Aneri."

The doorbell rang shrilly I tiptoed to the hall and peered through the Judas in my door A messenger with flowers From Voytek I was right, after all. Except that this time he did not send red and white tulips, but red roses As red as the blood to be shed today.

I stood undecided before my open closet: which dress should I put on? In the afternoon I'd have to change to my uniform anyway. I decided on a white dress, hand-woven by Maria the way our great-grandmothers used to weave. The dress was so immaculately white, and I knew how soiled it would become before the day was over, that I broke into moody imaginings again. But I checked myself quickly I just had time to call up Barbarka before going to my briefing

"Good morning, darling Have you slept well?"

"Mummy!" squealed Barbarka into my ear "Can I go home today?"

"Yes, dear. In fact, I'd like you to stay at home all day I'm going out now, but will be back by two"

"Can't I see you before you go, Mummy?"

"Is it important, Barkarka? Couldn't we talk later?" I felt a little impatient note creep into my voice What did a thirteen-year-old have to say just at this point that was so important?

"Oh, but it is important, Mummy"

"All right, dear I'll meet you at the Pomianowski Café. It'll be on my way, anyway."

"How soon, Mummy?"

"In fifteen minutes. I'm leaving now."

Then I looked at our Persian cat, Kaytek, and felt generous.

"Get a pound of horse meat for Kaytek, on your way home," I said before hanging up

Poor Kaytek, he won't have his meat for long There won't be any for him tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, either.

Around the statue of Copernicus—sitting there sedately with his globe, as if conscious of the unique distinction of having been declared "Volksdeutsche" by the Nazis—pigeons exchanged their daily gossip and a couple of droshkis dozed peacefully, the horses burying their noses in their bags of oats.

On the corner of Obozna Street, Dorota crouched as usual over her basket of flowers. Dorota was a very brave woman, a widow with three children, all in the Home Army. It flitted through my head I wonder what post she's assigned to today?

"Good morning, Dorota," I said

"Good morning, madame. What will it be today? Violets?"

"Give me a nice bunch, please"

Dorota bent over her basket to pick out the nicest flowers. Without raising her head, she whispered

"There are spotters inside the gate of No. 6. Four of them."

"Thank you, Dorota. If anything comes up I'll be at the Pomianowski Café. You may call me up there. These are lovely flowers. Thank you."

I crossed Napoleon Square and caught the trolley uptown. The conductor wound his way laboriously through the tightly packed car.

"Come on, ladies and gentlemen. If anyone's willing to pay, I'll take the fare, please," he called cheerfully.

Practically no one paid the fare these days in Warsaw. That is, people did pay, but without taking their tickets from the conductor who then could sell the same ticket ten times over and more in a day. This system had been devised because the conductors were very poorly paid and it was one more way in which people could help one another, fooling the Germans at the same time. The Germans would get raging mad about this trolley business. They tried many a time, always unsuccessfully, to

put a stop to it with the help of "foxes"—as we called the *Volksdeutsche* who, though Polish citizens, declared themselves of German blood to gain extensive privileges. These informers were invariably thrown out of the trolleys flat on their faces, without even knowing who struck or pushed them, for a crowd would immediately surround the culprit to enable him to disappear in safety.

Barbarka was waiting for me. Before the war the café used to be crowded every day. Now it was almost empty, but it still retained its charm. The Germans never came here, except for the spies whom one could not fail to spot anyway. They were a unique brand of human creatures, trying to look either like ruffians from the country marveling at everything in the big city or like blasé cosmopolitans interested in nothing but the huge sheet of newspaper covering their faces up to the shifting eyes.

"Hi, Barbarka! How's the daughter?"

"I got to tell you something, Mummy," said Barbarka.

"Coffee, please," I told the waitress, wrinkling up my nose at the thought of the barley coffee they served at Pomianowski's nowadays. "What is it, dear?"

"I can't stay home this afternoon. I have to go . . . to go . . . to work."

"To work? Barbarka, what are you talking about?"

"Well . . . to my post."

"At what time?"

I heard my voice then, and it sounded calm. Yet I could hear my heart pounding.

"At five o'clock I have to be there," Barbarka spoke evenly, without hesitation, and her own brown eyes looked straight into mine.

I knew I could not fail her then. That frail human hope of saving a life that was dearest above all no longer mattered.

"I'm going, too," I heard my voice saying. It was still calm.

"I know," Barbarka's voice answered.

The barley coffee had grown cold and undrinkable.

"Stop over at the church to say a prayer," I said. "I'll see you at home around two o'clock."

Barbarka nodded gravely. There is something in us that cannot be labeled or named. I felt it then, this miracle of Barbarka's life that I, myself, was ready to bring in a supreme sacrifice to the German bullets.

"Come on Barbarka. I'll have to go or I'll be late."

It was not my hand that was numb this time. It was my heart.

At the gate of the Uyazdov Hospital they checked my pass carefully. Tuesday was not a visiting day.

I walked through the shaded alleys of the hospital grounds toward the building of the Holy Ghost, past the mass grave of soldiers and civilians who had died fighting here in September, 1939.

Christopher, an eminent surgeon and now an officer of the Home Army, was in command of the Uyazdov sector. It was under him that I had served here in 1939, and it was Christopher who had drawn me into the ranks of the Underground. After five years, I was at the same post and under the same commander, fighting the same enemy who was now nearing exhaustion under the pounding of the victorious Soviet armies across the Vistula and before the onrush of the triumphant Anglo-American forces in France.

Up the stone steps and into the vestibule of the Holy Ghost building I hurried. In the depths of the corridor a small red light burned at the door to the left. The meeting was obviously going on in Christopher's office. I knocked at the door, somewhat ashamed of being late.

Lieutenant Kozlowski opened the door and grinned broadly at my apologetic air.

"You're not too late. Christopher's not here yet."

About twenty people were gathered in Christopher's room. I knew some of them, but most were strangers. Colonel Malina introduced me. The white apron of Pulchercia attracted me to the corner of the room where she sat with three other girls. I knew all of them, having worked with each one at various times, but Pulchercia I loved best of all. She was tiny and round, with an aureole of blonde hair framing her doll-like face. She moved drowsily, as if it were a hot summer day, and her eyes made you think of the color of July honey.

Pulchercia was a doctor and I had met her first a couple of years before, when I enrolled for a secret course of medicine given at the Warsaw Nursing School. She lectured there at the time. Now she was working in the administration of the German-held hospital "Omega." Every day she trudged to work with some packages and bundles in her arms, and quite often some gallant German surgeon would help her carry them into the hospital unaware that she was smuggling, little by little, arms and ammunition in preparation for this day. Pulchercia's husband was in a German prisoner-of-war camp, and she had to fend for herself and her small daughter. Her brother had been killed by the Germans six weeks before. I had never heard Pulchercia complain. Her faith in the victory of justice and truth was never shaken.

"Here's Christopher," she whispered to me. "You got here by the skin of your teeth."

General Christopher, in command of the Uyazdov sector, stood in the door, filling it well with his seven-foot height. His white hair and his warm smile arrested attention. We got up to greet him.

"Hello, everybody," Christopher said. His voice always soothed me, no matter how tired or unnerved I might be. It had that quality of quiet assurance which made one think that nothing could go wrong as long as Christopher was around.

Silence fell on the room as Christopher walked over to his desk. Still standing, he began to speak:

"I shall not be the one, my dear ones, to remind you of the long time we have lived under German occupation, or of what it has brought us. These years will not be easily forgotten, for their memory is engraved on our very hearts.

"Today is the great day. Today the people of Warsaw are rising to free the capital from oppression. This is our order, and we shall carry it out. We'll have to conquer the city and hold on for a few days. The Soviet Army is expected to enter Warsaw on the fourth or fifth day of our Home Army's struggle within the city. Is everyone ready? Is everything clear? In the future, please report to Colonel Malina, or to myself. Or... wherever God will permit you to report."

The warmth seeped out of Christopher's voice when he turned to business at hand.

"Gentlemen, please report first."

One after another the men passed before Christopher, checking on their posts, asking last questions. Then the general called on us.

"Lieutenant Wanda, you're taking over Group III. You have twenty-two nurses under you, work in two shifts. Ten are to be used in the field. The same sector. No change in orders."

"Yes, sir," snapped Wanda.

"Lieutenant Pulchercia—same place. God be with you, Pulchercia. You'll not have an easy job of it at your hospital. Don't let them deport you right away. How many of our men do you have on the premises now?"

"Seven, sir, but well armed."

"All right, Lieutenant. Good luck."

Christopher had to bend down very low to kiss Pulchercia's forehead. I saw she had tears in her eyes, but

her lips did not tremble, and her small, exquisite hands were steady.

"Lieutenant Lucja, I hear you work yourself to death. You'd better have some rest during the few hours that remain. Oh, well, you may laugh at me for saying these things to a seasoned soldier such as you. Never mind. No changes in your orders, Lieutenant."

"Thank you, sir. I'm glad to see you in good spirits," Lucja smiled.

"How about you, Aneri?" Christopher turned to me. "How's the heart? No surprises now, remember."

"It's all right, sir. I don't think it will bother me."

"It better not. Couldn't you postpone your heart trouble for the duration, eh, Aneri?"

"Yes, sir," I said readily.

"Get Kruk to check on it for you, will you? He's a heart specialist, you know."

"I will, sir. Thank you, sir."

I shot a glance at the small, dried-up figure of Colonel Kruk standing behind Christopher in his black-rimmed glasses and seedy black suit. He smiled at me, as if saying, "I'll see what I can do for you, Lieutenant."

Suddenly Christopher seemed to recall something.

"Aneri," he said, "how about going over to the wholesale tobacco stores to see if you can get some cigarettes for our men? You ought to know what strings to pull there from your own long experience in the business."

"I'll see what I can do," I said modestly.

The meeting was breaking up. Hearty handshakes and murmured words of farewell:

"See you on the barricade."

"In the operating room."

"At the post."

"If God's willing."

"Keep your chin up and don't waste bullets"

"Don't yourself."

"Good luck!"

I went out with Pulchercia. She was going to her hospital right away, to stay there until the hour when it would become her barricade.

The air-raid alarm wailed piercingly over the city. We tilted back our heads to look at the sky. Were the Soviet planes coming over again to bomb Warsaw? But the sky was clear and serene. Pulchercia looked at her watch.

"Twelve o'clock, noon," she said. "So it's going to happen today."

The short blast of the siren faded away. In a few more hours the first shots would ring out. Warsaw would once more join the great fight—not only for a free Poland, but for a new day of freedom everywhere.

The Soviet Army had come closer to Warsaw every day. We had counted the miles impatiently until there were not enough miles left to count. We heard the rumble of the Soviet artillery across the Vistula, and daily the Russian planes roared overhead bombing Warsaw. We heard Soviet broadcasts in Polish exhorting us all to take up arms and help their offensive by rising within the city. We could not fail. God was with us. Right was with us. Our Allies were with us. Those Allies for whose own freedom our Polish sons had shed their blood on the far-flung battlefields of the world, in France, in Norway, in Libya, over England, in Italy—those Allies would surely help us win our freedom. We could not fail. A few days, a few days only, separated us from victory.

The sun was so bright that the entire city of Warsaw looked festive as we walked along. There was no fear in my heart. Nothing but boundless joy that the day was here at last, and that I was privileged to take part in it.

"Let's stop at Marago," Pulchercia said suddenly.

"All right."

We ordered coffee, real coffee, and a huge piece of

cake. The staggering price, running into hundreds of zlotys, did not matter any longer. The value of money ended as of this day, August 1, 1944.

After leaving Marago Café, we walked in silence to Sikorski Avenue, where we parted. Pulchercia's lips felt salty with tears.

I walked quickly toward the central tobacco store on Nowogrodzka Street. Captain Richard, one of our men, was there.

"How about some cigarettes for my sector, Richard?"

"Nothing doing. My orders are nothing for individual units. The Chief Quartermaster took five million cigarettes an hour ago. Your men will get their share, too."

It was high time to go home. Barbarka was waiting there. In two hours we would have to part again, God knows for how long this time. I hurried home.

Suddenly . . . shots!

They seemed to come from Widok Street, from Moniuszko Street, from everywhere. A dark green German truck full of police and machine guns bounced into the street.

A cold hand gripped my heart.

"Something went wrong. Someone must have betrayed us," flashed through my mind. I ran homeward, and running, I prayed.

TOPIEL STREET WAS QUIET I ran into the gate of No 27 and up the four flights. All out of breath, I knocked at my own door.

Barbarka's round childish face smiled at me.

"Dinner's ready, Mummy. I cooked it myself. And Mr. Yanek's here to say good-bye. He is going, too"

Yanek, co-owner of my tobacco shop, was also an officer in the Home Army. He stopped over to see us before reporting to his post.

Barbarka had done herself proud with dinner. I was to remember it longingly in the days to come vegetable soup and dumplings with crisp fried onion. The dumplings were slightly on the sticky side, but we did not care.

It was ten after three when I gathered my small bundle: soap and towel, toothbrush, and a light blanket. After all, the uprising was to last only five days.

"Let's go," I said to Yanek. "Barbarka has to wait for another girl who is coming for her."

Barbarka kissed me. She threw her arms around my neck and embraced me vehemently. She did not cry.

"Orders are orders, Mummy, aren't they?" she said. Her voice was sticky like those dumplings we ate.

Yanek stroked her blonde pigtails.

"Cheerio, Barbarka!" he smiled. But his voice... well, he, too, had eaten the dumplings.

My hand on the doorknob, I was about to step out, when shots rang again, this time on our street. I dashed over to the balcony of my room and looked out. Across the street Nela Anleg leaned out of the window, peering anxiously. The shots were pouring into Topiel Street from

two directions, but we could not see who was shooting.

"Nela! What do you think is going on?" I yelled across the street. It was useless to keep up pretenses any longer.

"I don't know, I'm sure. What time do you have?"

"Three-fifteen. What time do you have?"

"Same. It could not have begun, could it?"

Yanek and I ran downstairs. We had to get to our posts fast if it was still possible to get through.

On Cicha Street, two blocks away, we had to duck. The Germans were spraying it from machine guns. We withdrew from Topiel Street, trying to figure out another road to take, when we ran into a small band of men emerging from Tamka Street. There were six of them, armed with rifles and hand grenades fastened at their belts. Yanek wheeled around and pulled out his revolver. I tugged at his sleeve.

"Yanek, these are ours."

The men displayed the red-and-white armbands of the Home Army on the sleeves of their civilian coats. It was exhilarating. A thought was buzzing in my brain: "Have I missed the hour?"

A voice cried out: "Lie down, damn you, lie down!"

I fell on the pavement. The bullets whizzed above our heads. Then someone pulled me up none too gently.

"She'll be all right," an unfamiliar voice said, and I drew up indignantly.

"I am all right," I spoke right into the bushy beard of a chap wearing a red-and-white armband. "What time is it? Did it start already?"

A pair of young eyes looked me over severely.

"Who are you?"

I produced hastily a pink slip of paper, my identity card, signed by Radwan. All the members of the Home Army received such slips just before the uprising.

"Aneri, 2nd Lieutenant, soldier of the Home Army," my card read.

The Beard saluted gravely His card bore the pseudonym Brave

"I have the honor to report, Lieutenant, that you cannot pass this way."

I could not help chuckling.

"Who's in command of this sector?"

"Lieutenant Pobog"

"What happened? Did it start earlier?"

"Probably some were too quick on the trigger"

"Are you sure I can't pass through Krakowskie?"

"Positive, Lieutenant."

"Then I suppose nobody else will be able to get through here?"

"Impossible, Lieutenant."

I decided to go back home and set up the Red Cross station in my tobacco shop, which by prearrangement was to be run by those who could not reach their posts. Everything in my shop had long since been prepared for the occasion.

Barbarka was home, crying. Her girl friend had not come. Probably she, too, could not make it.

"Come on, Barbarka, you'll help me. We're going to open the Red Cross station."

Over the door I nailed the red poster with the white Polish Eagle and the inscription. "Warsaw Uprising—August 1, 1944." Soon the Red Cross flag was waving at the entrance. We laid out on a small table all the medical supplies I had. Barbarka ran upstairs to bring the electric pot, and started boiling water right away. We set up a makeshift bed, and even an "operating table."

Civilians from the neighborhood began to crowd into the door of the station. Many looked perplexed. Others, who knew about the uprising from members of their families taking part in the battle, beamed with pride and enthusiasm.

"Warsaw is fighting!" I called to them. "This is the uprising to set Warsaw free!"

There was a second of silence in the crowd of women and children in the doorway just a second. Then, spontaneously, they broke into song. With radiant faces they sang the old patriotic hymn:

*"Poland is not yet lost
As long as we are alive"*

Once the station had been opened and put in working order, I had to report to Command 2/4. I sneaked out through the back door to go to Tamka Street. As I turned the first corner, I caught sight of a man in regular Polish Army uniform. A sergeant in full regalia out in the open in Warsaw! "God bless him," I murmured.

At the entrance to Command 2/4 a very young soldier stood guard. He also wore the red-and-white armband of the Home Army, had a German hand grenade at his belt and a gun in his hand.

"Where are you going, madame?" he asked with a fine mixture of manliness and awe in his voice.

"To the commander. What is your rank, soldier?" I asked, showing him my military papers.

The lad turned crimson. He couldn't have been more than fourteen.

"I'm a private, madame," he said. "Company Four."

"All right. Let me m. I have to report to the commander."

Lieutenant Pobog sat at the telephone in the only chair in his "office." I walked in, wading through the papers and shavings that littered the floor.

Pobog's face was serious and pale, stamped with misery. He hung up the receiver and rose to greet me. I identified myself and reported the circumstances under which I

had opened the Red Cross station in his sector. Pobog smiled.

"Personally I don't mind that you couldn't get to your own sector," he said.

"How many nurses do you have in your company, Lieutenant Pobog?" I asked.

"Ten. Lieutenant Aniela is in charge of them."

A sturdy and broad-shouldered young man walked in. He cut a rather odd figure. He wore light trousers, a brown coat, a red-and-white armband, and a heavy military belt with a huge pistol, his right pocket was bulging suspiciously, probably with the cartridges for that dragon of a pistol.

"Lieutenant 'Sweeper'—Lieutenant Aneri," Pobog introduced us. "Let's go upstairs to meet our nurses," he said, giving Sweeper his instructions.

The wooden stairs creaked mercilessly as we walked upstairs. The nurses' quarters buzzed with animated conversation. The girls looked like youngsters let out of school.

The chatter stopped when the nurses saw us. Lieutenant Aniela came up. She was twenty-six. She had left her two-year-old daughter with her grandmother. Her husband was with the Home Army, but in a different section of the city.

"Lieutenant Aneri has opened the Red Cross station," Pobog explained. "It is included in our sector and you will work with Lieutenant Aneri. The station is on Topiel Street."

Aniela looked me over as carefully as I did her. But neither of us asked any questions. It was unnecessary. We were together in this struggle. Together—to the end.

"Aren't people funny, madame?" the laundress, Mrs. Kociol, accosted me. "Here I am, telling them so plainly that a cabbage head would understand, and still they

don't believe me Why, who'd know better than I, madame, what's going on?" Mrs. Kociol appealed to me

Indeed, one could see in the agitated and bewildered faces surrounding us that few could bring themselves to believe that tomorrow we would all be free again. After five years of German occupation, people could not quite imagine that there would be no more gallows in the streets, that execution squads would stop killing hostages and that from now on the nights would be peaceful.

"Didn't I have stacks and stacks of linen and sheets and towels and pillowcases in my laundry for the past two weeks?" Mrs. Kociol went on "Didn't I send them on to the hospitals? Why, even Mrs. Solomon, you know the one whose two sons had been shot on Skarszewska Street, she gave me twelve sheets, and she's not what you'd call a giving woman. Twelve sheets she gave me for the hospital, and pure linen they were, too. Do you know what linen sheets are? Wounds heal better on a linen sheet. Cover a man with a pure linen sheet and he won't lose half the blood he would otherwise I have been telling you, people, you won't see any more Germans in Warsaw And that's the truth. You tell them," she turned to me belligerently.

"It's true," I said "This is the day we have been waiting for so long The Home Army is rising in Warsaw to fight for the freedom of Poland, for your freedom. You can all help"

Mrs. Kociol nodded her head approvingly.

"What can we do?" wailed Mrs. Suchecka.

"Those of you who can leave your homes and work to help the Home Army, please report tomorrow at the Red Cross station, 27 Topiel Street. Come to me and I'll give you work."

A young woman shook her head slowly, thinking hard.

"Yendrek is with you, too, I guess," she said. "He told me this morning he had to go to the factory. Took a small

package with him, kissed me good-bye and went away. He must be frightened now.... My Good Jesus," she whispered. Quiet tears streamed down her cheeks.

By five-ten, the entire city of Warsaw was ablaze with gunfire. Back in the Red Cross station, I moved about quietly, checking the two small sterilizers, the shelf with medicines, the blanks for the registration of the wounded to come. I brought down Voytek's red roses and put them on my desk.

The door squeaked feebly behind my back. I turned around. A woman stood in the door. She was about fifty and dressed in a nurse's apron. Her eyes were rimmed in red, the eyelids swollen from tears.

"Can you use me?" she asked. "I can only work part time. I have to take care of my mother. She is eighty-four. But I can come in the evenings. I am a Red Cross nurse, a surgical nurse. I nursed in 1914, I nursed in 1921 and in 1939. Perhaps I can be of help now? My son is with the Home Army. I don't know what sector he's assigned to. My daughter is at the other end of town, in Mokotow. I can't get to her. She's expecting her first baby within a week. Her husband's with the Home Army, too. Won't you let me work with you? My name is Zofia Chosudolska."

Just when I wanted to talk with the woman, an order came through to report to our units fighting at the power station. I slung my first-aid kit over my shoulder and rushed off with Aniela, leaving Zofia behind at the Red Cross post.

As we entered the courtyard of the main power station, we found many of our men lying there wounded, cursing their bad luck. The worst cases were despatched at once to the Ursuline Sisters' Hospital on Tamka Street or to the hospital on Smulikowski Street run by the wonderfully efficient Dr. Zakubiek. The stretcher-bearers

would return promptly, but every time a new case was waiting for them already.

The wounded were in high spirits.

"Damn the wasp that stung me! Right at the beginning, too," I heard a voice Aniela bent over his leg.

"You must have sweet blood, brother," someone answered.

"You bet I have. Don't tell me it's serious, sister."

I worked on my wounded under the protection of a pile of scrap, near the jasmine bushes.

"Why are you hiding me here, sister? You want to kill me here, or what? ..."

The wag! He picked the right moment for joking, too. The bullets whizzed around us madly. Inside the massive buildings a fight to the death was raging. Fearing that the Germans might destroy the electric works before giving up the struggle, our units, which included men employed in the power station, had attacked it from within that afternoon. German reinforcements were now coming from the other side. German cannon were barking from the Poniatowski Bridge near by, on the Vistula River. What a moment for wisecracks!

But everything was going well for us. Our men stormed the basements and cornered the Germans there, forcing them to surrender. Already a Polish flag was hoisted over the power station. The first Polish flag in Powisle, our quarter of Warsaw!

Grenades whistled, but above the noise of the battle rose the old Polish revolutionary song to greet the red-and-white banner. They started singing it inside the buildings where the fighting had been furious; then the song was taken up in the courtyard; and then we picked it up.

*"In the smoke of fires,
In the dust of bloody strife."*

One of the nurses, Marysia, was wounded just then. They brought her to me and laid her on the bench under the jasmine bushes. She was shot in the shoulder. I dressed her wound and ordered her to the hospital. Marysia made an unmilitary grimace.

"What's the idea of sending me to the hospital?" she protested angrily. "I can stay here as well, with that silly scratch."

"You'll go, nurse," I spoke sternly. "In three days you may return to work."

"Yes, madame," she said obediently.

The German counter-attack from outside was gaining in strength. It was fairly quiet where we were, behind the wall.

"A German car is coming," our lookout announced. "Five of our men are running to meet it! One has fallen! . . . Another one is throwing a bunch of grenades! . . . He's got them! He's got them!"

I could not stand the suspense any longer. I ran over to the wall and climbed up the ladder to see for myself what was going on outside. A strong arm brusquely pulled me down.

"These damn women! Sticking their noses into everything," a voice behind me muttered.

I wheeled around indignantly, and gasped. Before me stood a large, beefy man in uniform, with three stars on his shoulder: a captain. But wasn't it Kojanoski, that same Kojanoski who kept a disreputable restaurant for the Germans not far from my house, that same brute who lived with a German prostitute-spy and of whom we had become so suspicious that we even had him trailed for a while? He—a captain of the Home Army? I had good reason to gasp. Captain Kojanoski smiled ruefully.

"Surprised, eh?"

He left immediately with a couple of men to bring in the two Germans captured with the car outside, and to

save the burning vehicle, if possible, for our future use.

The power station was in our hands. It was time to go back to my Red Cross station. I straightened the white dress which I still had on, although it was now dirty, and my red-and-white armband. As Aniela and I walked to Topiel Street, we saw people everywhere wearing the red-and-white armbands of the Home Army. In the crowd far down Drewniana Street, they seemed like so many flowers.

I rubbed my eyes incredulously when I reached my station. The room was full of paper bags and bundles and jars and boxes and baskets,—contributions to the Red Cross from the entire neighborhood. Lieutenant Pobog was sitting quietly on the field cot amidst all the bundles, awaiting my return. Carefully I picked my way between bags of flour and baskets of potatoes. The door behind me creaked. With some difficulty I turned around to see what looked like a huge paper bag standing on two legs on the threshold.

"Come in," I said hospitably. "If you can, that is."

The bag moved slightly to the right, and a head emerged on the left, a woman's head.

"I brought you some supplies for the Red Cross," she said. "We went from house to house on our street and collected food and things for the boys. Here," and she put her burden down on the floor.

"Thank you, indeed," I said. "And please thank your neighbors, too."

Then the door opened again, and I just stood there, a lump in my throat, watching it open and close, open and close, letting in people laden with sacks and baskets, letting them out empty-handed. They would put their offerings down, sometimes without a word, turn and walk out, not waiting for any thanks.

I shuddered at the thought of sorting out all these supplies. Besides, I had to go out with Sweeper to look over

the building on the corner of Obozna and Topiel Streets, where Unit Two, Company Four, Group VIII, was to move tomorrow. The inhabitants were most cooperative. Old Mrs. D., who could hardly walk, offered to us without any reservations her apartment, her antiques, linens, larder, everything.

"You can take everything I have for the boys," she smiled serenely. "I won't need anything."

"Aneri, can you take care of feeding Unit Two?" Sweeper asked me.

"Yes, sir," I said. "Oh, Lord," I reflected. "Eighty men! How can I ever?"

"The men have food for today and tomorrow," Sweeper said. "You don't have to worry about them right away."

Comforting thought, indeed! Just like a man to say such a thing. I could well imagine Sweeper used to bring home to dinner unexpectedly dozens of friends and was genuinely surprised at his wife's distress. I could almost hear him saying, "Just whip up anything you have dear."

The person to consult in this emergency was Mrs. Solata, the wife of our janitor. She was young, good-looking and intelligent. Both she and her husband, Jozef, who had gone off that day with the other men of the Home Army, were tried patriots.

Mrs. Solata came out of the basement of her house, looking tired and worn out. Her eyes bore the traces of tears. I wondered whether to ask her, for I knew she would not refuse the hard job. But I had no choice.

"Could you take care of the meals for Lieutenant Sweeper's Unit Two, Mrs. Solata?" I asked. "There are eighty men there. I would send someone to help you with the work."

"Of course," she said unhesitatingly, trying to smile. "But I do not have that much food."

"I'll supply the food. It's just the cooking, Mrs. Solata."

Just then an unexpected difficulty nearly overwhelmed me

"Good Lord, woman, where shall we get the cauldrons to cook in for such a crowd?"

"We'll take the big laundry cauldrons," Mrs Solata suggested. "But we'll scrub them thoroughly first"

"I guess that's what we'll have to do," I agreed humbly. As far as I was concerned, Mrs. Solata from now on was a veritable brain trust.

When I got back to my station, I saw that Barbarka and Zofia had managed to sort out most of the provisions people had brought us. We had plenty of sugar, flour, grits—and vegetables from the gardens that had sprung up during the war in the courtyards of the apartment houses. And we even had a gift of five pounds of pork!

The first reports on the progress of the fighting came in. The news was good. In our sector, Tamka Street was entirely in our hands. Dobra Street was cleaned out. The fighting was progressing well on Smulikowski Street where we were attacking the Germans who held the building of the Social Insurance Institute. On Copernicus Street we suffered heavy losses, but held our positions. Decidedly, the news was encouraging in the fifth hour of the Warsaw uprising.

People still kept coming with provisions collected in the neighborhood. Our supplies were so plentiful that we decided to share them with other sectors. With the help of a few civilian volunteers, we began stuffing big paper bags.

"May I help you, too?" a voice boomed behind me.

I turned around to welcome Lieutenant Skala with a smile, the first I had even given him. There had once been some misunderstanding between us. We shook hands now.

"I am very glad to see you here, Skala," I said heartily. Skala beamed at me.

"No hard feelings?" he asked

"None whatever," I answered "Let bygones be bygones"

With the help of Skala and a few other men, we soon carried nineteen sacks, about a hundred pounds each, to the power-station buildings. A Home Army patrol stopped us a couple of blocks away.

"Your password?"

"Wilno," I answered. "I am bringing a few civilians with me, with provisions for your unit."

"All right," a young voice answered in the dark "You may go. This sector is all clear."

The officer in command of the power station came forward with an extended hand. I used to know him well socially, never suspecting he was in the Home Army, too.

"Fancy seeing you here," he chortled.

"Fancy seeing *you*," I laughed back "On the receiving end, too. We brought you some supplies. vegetables, sugar, fats and flour."

"That's good. We have plenty of canned goods, thoughtfully stored here by the former occupants, but none of your delicacies."

"How many prisoners have you taken here?" I ventured.

"About a hundred Germans and some forty Ukrainians. We have put them to work already. No doubt you have electricity in your sector."

"In perfect order," I replied, grinning with satisfaction. Throughout the years of German occupation we were furnished with electricity only for three hours a day.

It appeared that our official policy was to treat the members of the regular German Army as prisoners of war, according to the Geneva Convention, to shoot on the spot the Gestapo-men and SS-men, and to hand over

to special courts all those accused of collaborating with the enemy as well as those who had declared themselves *Volksdeutsche*.

Back at our post, Sweeper took me upstairs to introduce me to the girls of the Liaison Service. In the absence of a regular system of army communications, young women couriers constantly risked their lives carrying messages between sectors of the embattled front. There were four of them here. Magda and Bozenka looked like twins and pretended to be very mature, the way nineteen-year-old girls usually do. Grazyna had a soft smile on her round face, and soft, fluffy hair. Danuta was the leader of the group. She had long, straight hair, slanting dark eyes, and a dimple in her chin. A dynamic personality, she was fairly bubbling over with fighting spirit. Her courage was a match for the bravest soldier's, for Danuta was a veteran of the Home Army, having taken active part in counter-espionage work long before the Uprising.

"Come and meet our boys now," Sweeper said.

We went to the back room; the men gathered there rose to greet us. Sweeper introduced them to me one by one: "Olek. Orphan. Yanosik. Mixer. Lynx. He is my brother."

The last man held out his hand.

"Lieutenant Sparrow."

Sparrow had a birdlike, yet strong, face. He was blond, and his gray eyes were the color of steel. There was the quality of steel about him, too, something solid, hard, unbending. He did not click his heels and bow his head ostentatiously the way Lynx had done. But his handshake was firm and friendly.

"Are you going back to the station now?" Sweeper asked. "Sparrow and I are going on a reconnaissance. We can go out together."

"Yes, I have to make a tour of the shelters and base-

ments to check whether there are any sick or wounded there," I answered.

"All right Let's go"

We started walking down the stairs, Sparrow adjusting his belt so the holsters would be handy. The men descended first. Suddenly I became conscious of someone watching us. I looked up. There was Danuta, perched over the staircase. She was looking past me. She watched Sparrow making the turn on the narrow staircase. Slowly her hand went up, and she made a small sign of the cross after him.

It was late in the night when I returned to the Red Cross station from my inspection tour of the cellars which were all crowded with ailing and wretched humanity. I lay down on the cot to snatch some rest. Dark clouds in the sky foreshadowed rain.

"Rain .. Good or bad for us?" I thought hazily as I was falling asleep. "Perhaps good. The fires won't catch on so easily."

Grenade explosions outside went on and on, unceasingly....

HEAVY THUDS from below awakened me at six-thirty. Our men were hacking through the walls to open underground passages from cellar to cellar through the entire length of the street

A voice, strange and muffled, unlike that of a living man, came from the outside:

"Hello, hello, this is London. . . ."

I jumped from my cot, not believing my own ears. A radio had been installed in the window of No. 25, and now the boys were working at it to improve the reception. A crowd, oblivious of the rain, was listening in the street.

"This is London," the voice repeated in Polish. "We are with you in this fight. We know what is in your hearts today, for ours beat in unison with yours. Your struggle will be hard and costly, but we can promise you that victory will be yours and victory will bring you freedom. We wish we were with you right now, but only in spirit can we join you on the fighting streets of Warsaw.

"We shall speak to you again at twelve o'clock, noon."

The broadcast ended with the same song, "In the Smoke of Fires," that we had sung when the power station was taken.

We stood there as if stunned. For the first time in these five long years we could hear the voices of our brothers abroad, the voice of our government, without crouching in caves and hide-outs in constant fear of German discovery. All of a sudden we felt closer to that faraway world which read about war over the morning cup of coffee, closer to the world of heedless freedom which does not know how to treasure it.

The London broadcast was followed by an announcement from our own broadcasting station, recently stalled by the Home Army:

"Poles! People of Warsaw! All those of you who are not yet in the ranks of the Home Army! We call up you to join our fight against the German criminals. Help the Home Army build barricades on your streets, wells, combat fires. Let no one be missing in this magnificent hour of victory.

"Warsaw is fighting and her streets blossom with fresh graves of her heroic soldiers. Not one drop of the blood must be shed in vain.

"Right and Justice are with us. Within our Polish hearts lives the memory of these five years of serfdom. They are now in the past. Today the Polish banners we had hidden so long are flying over the buildings that are in our hands. And in our hands they will remain. May God help us.

"And now a short communiqué:

"We are fighting in all the sections of the city and our losses are heavy. Liaison between various sectors is greatly hampered, but in general our progress is most satisfactory.

"The Germans are using tanks against our posts. They herd Polish women and children in front of the tanks to keep us from destroying them. On Napoleon Square Captain Antek and his unit have succeeded in saving the unfortunate hostages and destroying the tank. Two Germans, Corporal Hornet and Sergeant Stenscher, were taken prisoner. The rest of the Tiger-tank's crew were burnt to death. Captain Antek himself perished in the action. The commander-in-chief decorated him posthumously with the Cross of Valor.

"This afternoon you will receive copies of Polish papers. The Underground press will come out into the open despite the great difficulties in distribution while the newsboys and newsgirls are bound to encounter."

I walked over to Mrs. Solata's, and we quickly took stock of our provisions. I ordered the menu for the first dinner. vegetable soup cooked with those precious five pounds of pork, and gruel. Two courses, what a sumptuous repast!

Barbarka was waiting for me at the Red Cross station with a huge slice of bread and some dreadful jam made of carrots and beets. This jam was one of the few items the Germans permitted us to purchase on our ration coupons. Barbarka was worried.

"I shouldn't be here at all, Mummy," she said solemnly. "I should go and try to reach my post. They must be shorthanded there anyway. Don't you think so?"

"We have so much work right here, Barbarka," I answered. "But, of course, if you must go, you'll go as soon as it will be possible to get through."

"All right," said Barbarka and picked up a rag to wash the floor of the station.

Danuta, the sprightly liaison girl of Unit Two, appeared with a message: "Lieutenant Aneri, please report to the commander."

I found quite a few people assembled in Pobog's office.

"We must send reinforcements to Kosciuszko Boulevard," Pobog told us. "There's heavy fighting there."

"How many men?" asked Sweeper

"Thirty-two plus two liaison girls and five nurses."

I went with four other nurses. On the corner of Topiel and Tamka Streets we met a group of men coming from the general direction of the fighting. Some of the men I recognized immediately as high-ranking officers.

Through Dobra Street we made our way to Red Cross Street, right near the Vistula. At the corner, we saw German infantrymen advancing on us behind two Tigers. We scrambled for cover.

Nearby was the Church of Saint Teresa. I went in,

following Sweeper, Golecz, Sparrow and a group of soldiers. The church was crowded with civilians

A few boys of our anti-tank units came in. With them was Nela, my neighbor from across the street. In one hand she clutched a bottle of explosive mixture, in another she held a small Polish flag. She edged over to me and waved the red-and-white bit of material.

"Are you crazy?" I whispered, pointing at the flag

"Don't you know what it's for?" she asked, surprised at my naiveté "It goes on the tank after we've captured it"

The very youthful Lieutenant Albert crawled over the threshold to see how close the Germans were, and came back in high spirits to report. "The street is empty, except for our men, who are waiting for them to get here. The Germans must think they have us trapped."

"Don't worry, Albert, they'll play cat and mouse with us yet," Nela said.

"Well, we are here to play with them, aren't we?"

The bells rang for Sanctus, and silence fell over the church. It was only then that I realized that a Mass was being said at the main altar. From the outside came the clatter of the tanks on the cobblestones, growing louder and louder in the stillness of the church. Death must sound like that when it approaches, I thought.

Sparrow stood close by the door and looked into his cupped hand. It held a small picture of a three-year-old girl, Sparrow's only child. It was as if he prayed to the child.

"To the door, now," said Sweeper. I caught sight of the small figure of Gregory, once the guard of Command 2/4, brandishing a huge revolver. There was Grazyna, of the Liaison Service, pulling off the safety trigger on her gun. Sparrow was now kneeling in the doorway, his gun raised, poised for the attack. Danuta was standing beside him, watching him intently, her lips moving speechlessly.

The street outside rocked with shots. We had to save ammunition, so we relied largely on homemade grenades and bottles filled with explosives to meet the onslaught of the Tigers and the heavily armed German infantry.

"Jesus!" someone sighed near me. The Germans reached our church.

Sparrow ran out, hurling his grenades. Hazily, I saw Danuta follow him. The racket of explosions deafened us. The German bullets whizzed through the doorway as I was running out, too. I almost fell on the steps of the church, already slippery with blood.

An explosion threw me to the ground. One of the German tanks had burst into flames. The other Tiger turned back. Two houses were on fire in the block. The German infantry fell to the ground, spraying us with bullets. But we would not play the game that way. The boys ran forward, hurling their explosives and hand grenades, shooting only when they were close enough to use their revolvers.

"Hurrah!"

A miracle happened. A German soldier in the forward line got up and raised his hands in surrender. The others immediately quit fighting. Yelling and screaming, they scrambled down the street, fleeing as fast as they could. Past the burning two houses our boys followed on their heels.

I hit a pile of cobblestones wrenched out of the street, and it brought me to a painful stop. I was choking with the dust of the dug-up streets and the smoke of the fires. The sweat streamed down my face blinding me completely.

I wiped off some of the grime and looked over the street. Many bodies were sprawling around me. I hastened to where most of them were lying, although bullets still continued to sing around me. Two nurses were already among the stricken. They turned toward me, but

kept looking somewhere above my head, beyond me, as if seeing a ghost. I glanced back at the church, and what I saw made me stop and gasp

On the stone steps of the church stood the priest, immaculate in the dignity of his garments, a gold ciborium in his hands. He was bending over a dying man stretched on the steps red with blood and giving him the Host

Someone moaned at my feet. I knelt beside a limp, young body. He wore the insignia of the cavalry, that cavalry of the Home Army which had no horses. The boy's eyes were closed, a small rivulet of blood ran from his mouth over his chin and collar. I did not even have to take his pulse to know that he had died. I reached into his blouse pocket and pulled out his pink identity card "Kujawiak—Zbigniew Radwanski—Group II."

I dragged Zbigniew's body to the wall and went to join Stefa and Aniela. We counted nineteen badly wounded men. We gave whatever first aid we could, and sent them to the hospitals.

On the steps of the church a group of women worshipers was now kneeling. They bathed their handkerchiefs in the blood of those who had died here. This was the general practice throughout the years of the Occupation. Every time the Germans shot hostages in the streets of Warsaw, before the slayers even had left the place of their crime, handkerchiefs and white pieces of cloth reverently gathered the blood of the martyrs. These were to serve as grim mementoes for those who would live happily in the days to come in a Free Poland.

The Germans withdrew to the Poniatowski Bridge where a furious battle was going on. The tank we had taken was still burning. I ran into Lieutenant Sweeper "We're advancing," he declared. "Where's Sparrow?"

"With Rafal and his men. They've had many wounded there. They had to withdraw to No 14."

"Are they going back to the post?"

"No. They'll join us in a minute."

There was a barricade on Dobra Street, but it was built too low. We had to bend down and sneak behind it.

"Watch your head!" warned Hawk. He was short, stocky and sixteen. The day before, on the Copernicus Street barricade, he had, single-handed, killed five Germans, and then in a bravado attack stemmed the German advance into the neighboring Ordynacka Street by recklessly hurling his grenades at them. He had received a Silver Cross from the commander-in-chief, and was well pleased with himself, as his was one of the first decorations conferred in the Warsaw Uprising. The boy was determined to keep up his record.

The German artillery on the banks of the Vistula shelled the road ahead of us so densely that fountains of earth and bricks and stones barred our way. We turned back to Smulikowski Street when word came from Lieutenant Krych that the struggle for the Social Insurance Institute Building was getting tougher. Our boys were still fighting the Germans inside the building and the enemy was getting reinforcements from the outside.

Sweeper made up his mind quickly. He beckoned to Danuta: "Go to Command 2/4, Danuta, and tell them we are going to help out at the Social Insurance Institute."

We marched hurriedly to the Institute, over torn-up sidewalks sprouting with new graves. Our feet would stumble on the dug-up streets and get stuck in the sand. Our hands, sticky with human blood, ached from dragging our heavy stretchers. Our throats were dry and dusty. In our heads a thousand hammers seemed to be

pounding. From barges on the Vistula, the Germans were firing their light cannons; the din of their machine guns and mine throwers was constant.

"We'll be a pretty-looking lot," a soldier dressed in tattered dungarees growled. "We'll be smothered here, like puppies."

Hugging the wall, we waited for a lull. When it came, we ran to a house across the street, opposite the building still held by the Germans. The door was broken in. Sparrow led the way. The first apartment we entered was useless to us. Its windows faced the court.

"Let's go to the front apartment," Sparrow called. We found the door locked. Sparrow tried to force it without success. Suddenly, it opened.

"What is it?" a cracked old voice asked dolefully.

No one answered. We entered the apartment and filed past mountains of piled-up furniture, past the dried-up figure of the owner, to the window. Sparrow looked out.

"This is a good place," he announced.

The Germans were below us, and we could see them clearly. They were some fifty yards away, but at an angle from us, which made it more difficult.

"How many are we?"

"Eighteen," someone answered.

I looked into my first-aid kit. It was badly torn, and I had lost everything but the scissors and some bandages.

"Never mind," Aniela said quietly. "Perhaps you won't need the stuff this time."

Aniela was so calm it was maddening. Even under fire she ran rhythmically, and looked unruffled, as if German bullets were of no importance whatsoever. I wished I could look like that.

"What do you think, Sweeper?" I heard Rafal's voice. "How about a few of us going downstairs as a cover, so they would not catch us all here?"

"How many grenades do you have, Rafal?"

"About thirty."

"All right. Distribute them to your men, and send some downstairs."

I wandered through the apartment, looking for some beverage for the boys. I found five bottles, tightly corked, and brought them to the front room. Shouts of glee greeted me.

"Just a moment!" I warned. "Better check what we are going to drink. Who knows if it isn't rat poison or something?"

"Oh, no, madame, it's all right," the wrinkled-up little man, whose apartment we had invaded, spoke up timidly. "It's good raspberry wine, madame. My dead Yadviga—may God remember her dear soul—used to make it every year for our wedding anniversary. One bottle a year, madame. I've saved these bottles ever since she died."

The boys put the bottles back on the table. I saw Skorup licking his lips with his dry tongue, and swallowing the way dogs do when they are watching the food they can't get.

"Oh, no, please, gentlemen, please, do drink it," our host waved his thin hand in a gesture of all-embracing hospitality. "Do drink the wine, gentlemen. Yadviga would have given it to you, were she here now. To your health, gentlemen!"

"A dream," Sparrow mused gratefully. He looked at me with commiseration, as I advised the boys not to drink too much of Madame Yadviga's wine.

We heard hurried steps running up the stairs, and then a man covered with the grime of battle appeared in the door.

"Who's in command here?" he panted.

Sweeper, Rafal and Krych were from different units, each in command of his group. Sweeper took over.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A message from the Commander of Sector 28 At the sound of the *heynal*, you are to strike on the left flank, in Smulikowski Street. There are not too many Germans there. At the same time, we shall push them out of the building on your side. Make a lot of noise. Use up the grenades you have."

We waited in silence for the sound of the *heynal*. It got hotter and stuffier every minute. Smoke came pouring in through the broken windows. We coughed and sniffed and cursed. And waited

A low roar of motors came overhead. German planes! I obeyed my first impulse and shouted:

"Downstairs, boys! To the shelters!"

No one moved. I looked around. Faces were set, eyes were tense. Sweeper had his hand cupped around his ear. They waited for the *heynal* to sound.

Grazyna took down the last words of Sweeper's message to the Sector Command, and my request for more nurses if they were available. She received an extra hand grenade for an emergency. She straightened her belt, brushed her curls off her forehead, and walked out, unsmiling but without a trace of fear. "They did pick them well for liaison work," I thought admiringly.

At that instant, three bombs, one after another, crashed in the vicinity. The houses around us crumbled and brick dust filled the air and our nostrils. And in the midst of this howling pandemonium of destruction, the notes of the *heynal* rose clear.

We ran downstairs, and were whirled into battle. Fires swept over us. Green German uniforms mixed with our own. People were running to and fro, some yelled, others moaned. While bombs were falling all around, our scrambling feet stumbled against dead bodies littering the street.

The German cannon fire seemed to quiet down. And then, the Polish flag was hoisted over the building of the

Social Insurance Institute! But no one sang. None of us rejoiced loudly over the victory. A silence like prayer engulfed us all.

The nurses went to work in the street. There were many of us there that day. Kneeling on the broken pavement, we unwound the long white bandages that turned red so quickly and changed into trailing ribbons of blood. Once the battle was over, everybody helped the nurses in picking up the wounded and carrying them to safety.

Women from the neighboring houses ventured out with pitchers of water for the wounded and for the soldiers. These civilians looked scared to death, yet they stuck to their errands of mercy.

Then all the strength which I had stored up for the days of battle left me suddenly. I squatted under the wall, my face in my hands, and felt utterly numb. I was soaked through and through with human blood and sweat. The dirt gritted in my mouth and my eyes could not see clearly, having been blurred by the sights of fire and explosions and death. I knew I was falling asleep, and desperately I tried to keep awake by focusing my eyes on some object or person.

As if through a haze, I saw one of the civilian women, with a blue pitcher full of water and a blue drinking cup in her hand, walking through the street that had been turned into a battlefield. Her hand trembled as she poured the water from the pitcher into the cup, so that she spilled precious drops on the dusty ground. She looked around timidly. There was a beaten look in her eyes, and fear in her drawn, unhappy and pathetic face.

A man was sitting propped up against the wall. She approached him with her pitcher as he called to her in a hoarse voice. I blinked and looked hard. The man was in a green German uniform. The woman, too, noticed the uniform. She drew back. Then she made one step forward. She stopped as if to turn and go away. The German

did not say a word. He just watched her, unable to move, cramped with pain. Suddenly, as if to fight off her reluctance, the woman poured some water from the pitcher and held the cup to the lips of the German.

She was at my side a minute later. I took the cup from which the German had just drunk and poured the warmish water down my mouth.

"What's the matter with him?" I nodded in the direction of the German.

"He's wounded. He's a German. He wanted to drink ...I...I did not know what to do...I gave him a drink... He is wounded." The woman was confused "Let God judge him," she said.

Aching all over, I struggled up to my feet and went over to the German. I took his hand. He pulled himself free. Then he opened his eyes, saw me, and looked at his crushed legs. I knelt down and began cutting his trouser legs to dress his wounds.

IT WAS NOW evening of the second day. Captain Adam, an engineer of the Home Army, appeared at a late hour in our Red Cross station with orders to build a barricade to protect our sector from a possible attack by the German garrison at the University, just a block beyond.

We were then working hard at enlarging our quarters by annexing an adjoining butcher shop which, with its gleaming white tiles and whitewashed walls, became our medical ward.

"Who'll build the barricade?" I asked. "Will you send us some German prisoners of war to do the job?"

"Oh, no!" Captain Adam seemed startled. "I expect you will manage somehow with the local people."

I muttered something unpleasant. The Germans were dragging our civilians out of their homes to use as shields for their tanks, for the building of barricades and pillboxes. Why did we have to be so squeamish about using German prisoners?

Captain Adam listened to my outburst without much sympathy.

I argued that we had only women and children and some old people left in this sector, and that our soldiers had their hands full elsewhere. Captain Adam was unmoved.

"I'm sure it will work out somehow," he said. "Good night, Lieutenant."

It did work out. During the night, all those who were able to move anything at all built that barricade with little more than their bare hands. It was six yards wide and four deep, and was buttressed on the outside, facing

Obozna and Browarna Streets, by an escarpment constructed of cobblestones, blocks from the sidewalks, earth and junk. A small opening on the left enabled us to look down Browarna Street beyond the barricade. The right side of that street was littered with some fifteen corpses, mostly of women and children, shot while passing by the University grounds by the Germans entrenched there. They were killed on the first day of fighting, but we could not remove the bodies because Browarna Street was closely watched by the enemy, and to go there meant to invite more death. Yet something had to be done about it, as the heat of the August sun would decompose the bodies in a few more days. I reported the case to the Headquarters of the Sanitary Service in the hope that some way would be found to cope with it.

The German planes ushered in the third day of the Uprising at the same moment as the bright, burning sun. They circled over us low, for they had nothing to fear from our short-range arms. They did not bomb us that morning. Instead, they dropped leaflets. I picked one up to see what the latest German trick was. Sweeper, Sparrow and Yanosik peered over my shoulder as I read aloud.

"An order to the Home Army.

"Prime Minister Mikolajczyk's visit to Moscow did not bring about an understanding with Soviet Russia as to the mutual help and collaboration between our two countries. In view of that, I order all the units of the Home Army to return to their bases, as we have begun negotiations with the German authorities to join forces in a common struggle against the Soviet Union.

"August 2, 1944.

"Signed: General Bor, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army."

The men around me shrugged their shoulders at this clumsy forgery. I crumpled the leaflet and threw it away.

"They don't want to fight us," Yanosik said, boastful as

ever. "Perhaps it does mean that the Russians are advancing on Warsaw. That would explain the silence on the Russian front ever since the Uprising started."

"It might also mean that they have learned of the American and British planes which are due with supplies and ammunition for us," I remarked hopefully.

"They'd better hurry, or they might be too late," Sparrow said curtly

For the second time in a few short months our Prime Minister had gone from London to Moscow to try to patch up the growing controversy between Poland and Russia. Yet it did not occur to us that the political differences might in any way affect either Russian or Polish military operations against the Germans. The Uprising was conceived as help from within to the Soviet advance from without. We had expected the Soviet Army to join forces with us in five days. The third day was now here, and it was the third day of complete silence on the other side of the Vistula on which our eyes were set. No Soviet planes came to bring us the arms for which we clamored or to chase away the swarms of German fighters and bombers

"They'd better hurry," added Sweeper heavily "We might be in trouble. I've got eighty men in Unit Two, and not enough guns to go round. One machine gun and twenty service pistols... Makes me laugh. Funny, ain't it?"

"Not exactly," Sparrow's voice was grave. "But we have hand grenades."

"Yeah. We're making them all the time."

The radio blared from the windows of No. 25. This morning it brought us the joint proclamation of the Government Delegate in Poland, the Chairman of the Council of National Unity and the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army. A crowd was listening to the report that the larger part of Warsaw was in our hands and

to the exhortation to continue the fight for a democratic and free Poland

A tiny figure in slacks squeezed through the crowd And then a timid, little voice asked: "Did you get the papers here yet?"

"No, not yet."

"What did you bring, girlie?"

"*The Bulletin*," the child replied Her forehead was covered with beads of sweat I wiped off her face and took her to my station, clutching my copy of *The Bulletin* It was the first time in five years that I could read a Polish paper out in the open

"How did you get here, child?"

"Through Nowy Swiat Street and Warecka. There are some barricades there already, and tunnels. There is hard fighting on Dabrowski Square and Napoleon Square, near the Central Post Office But I managed. I'm small, so it's easier for me to slip by."

"I'm going to our Headquarters shortly I'll have to pass through Napoleon Square," I said. "Is it very bad on Mazowiecka Street?"

"Well, you'll see." The girl did not sound very encouraging. She sipped her tea and ate her slice of bread unhurriedly. "It's hot there, all right"

Barbarka was still upstairs, and probably asleep peacefully in her own bed, when I left for Headquarters. I was directed to take the roundabout "safe" way, running from one barricade to another, then waiting, more running and waiting again for an opportunity to make another dash

In Napoleon Square a unit of the Home Army was attacking the last German pillbox covering the Post Office. The German machine guns crackled without stopping, and our homemade hand grenades could not make a dent in the pillbox. Only a large bunch of grenades thrown

right into the machine-gun nest might prove effective

Crouching inside the gate near our positions, I heard the captain in command saying to his men: "No use dawdling here any longer. I'll crawl out there and throw a handful of eggs inside."

"I could do it better, sir," a voice piped up. It was not the voice of a grown-up man. It broke on this short sentence and ended in a falsetto. "I'm much smaller. They won't see me so easily."

The captain muttered something.

"I can do it, sir," the boy's shrill voice pleaded. "You'll see, I can do it. They won't even see me crawling."

There was a moment of silence. Then the officer said: "All right. Go, sonny. We'll try to divert their attention."

He uttered a few more words. Immediately a handful of men darted to the opposite side of the street. From there they opened fire on the Germans. The boy sneaked out of the gate. Flat on his belly he crawled toward the spluttering machine-gun nest. He pushed a square flagstone out of the sidewalk pavement ahead of him.

Breathlessly I watched him crawl, measuring the distance

"Good Lord, let him kill them," I prayed. My fists were clenched.

Now the boy was right near the pillbox. Too close for the machine-gun bullets to stop him. Slowly, cautiously, he began to get up. He pulled out the grenades. I could see his face plainly then, a face out of this world, grim with purpose, and I began to cry.

The boy rose to his full height. He thrust into the death-spitting mouth of the pillbox his handful of grenades. Instantly the explosion hit the whole square. The pillbox went up in smoke and fire.

We ran out from behind the gate, and made for the boy. I was not conscious of the sudden silence until I came to the small body lying in a heap out there. Then I

realized that the Post Office was in our hands and so was Napoleon Square. There was nothing I could do for the boy. I wondered whether God would ever be able to straighten out his accounts of the young who crowded their entire lives into one brief hour.

At the offices of the Sanitary Service they could not promise to help me out in clearing away the dead bodies on Browarna Street. Not immediately, anyway. The "gatherers" whose duty it was to remove corpses from the streets were overworked to exhaustion.

"The city is full of dead," I was told. "We'll try to send you a unit of 'gatherers'. They'll know how to deal with your particular situation if you lead them to the spot. Perhaps they'll be able to come there tonight. We'll see."

I then made my way to our Headquarters, located in the massive building of the Postal Savings Bank on Jasna Street. After some close inspection of my credentials, I was led to Colonel Matylda, the head of the Women's Army. Though elderly and white-haired, her voice was sure and her eyes bright and inquisitive. I reported to her that I was now with Group VIII, Company 4, operating a Red Cross station, with ten nurses and four liaison girls.

"Are you a nurse, Lieutenant Aneri?"

"Yes, madame. But I have had my military training, too, both for field service and administrative work."

"Marya, bring some blanks for Lieutenant Aneri," Colonel Matylda turned to her aide, a tall blonde in an officer's uniform.

After I had filled out the questionnaires and signed the proper declarations, Colonel Matylda handed me a yellow card.

"This will let you in here any time of day or night," she explained crisply. "It also makes you responsible for the Women's Army posts in the Powisle sector. There

are sixteen posts there. In addition, you are to organize the laundries, kitchens and sewing centers, and help the soldiers in your sector as best you can. Good-bye, Lieutenant, and good luck. Bring your daughter here, sometime I'd like to meet the young lady."

I walked out of the Headquarters, and in my heart I marveled at the organization of the Home Army. We were already taking it as a matter of course. Yet this intricate structure was built in the Underground during five years of deadly serfdom. Namelessly, painfully, with no help to sustain us, but in the hope that our allies would eventually bring us freedom, we toiled and waited for deliverance from oppression. And now the end of the war was at hand.

"Duck down, sister!" someone called to me at the corner of Warecka Street, and I did. A shell whistled over my head. I could not see it, but felt the current of air in its wake.

I ran across Napoleon Square and crouched inside the same gate where I had that morning watched the small boy crawl to his death and his glory.

There were neither wounded nor dead near the smoldering pillbox. The wounded must have been removed to the hospitals already. As for the dead, many small wooden crosses marked freshly dug graves in the street. Each cross bore a red-and-white armband of the Home Army.

The houses on Warecka Street were connected with the adjoining streets by tunnels cut through cellar walls. In one of these passages I ran into Mrs. Rawska, whom I had met first some two years before when Barbarka's girl scouts were meeting secretly at our house. Mrs. Rawska used to give talks to the girl scouts. She now conducted some sewing circles where her scouts worked for the Home Army, making uniforms, flags, armbands, sheets. Her two daughters helped her in this work. They

were both disabled. The elder one was sixteen, the younger one fourteen. In 1939, while working at a field kitchen, the burst of a German gas shell had almost blinded the elder girl and torn a leg off the younger. Despite their infirmities, both girls worked again in 1944 for the Home Army.

"Barbarka is very distressed," I told Mrs. Rawska. "She could not get to her post before the shooting started and now she does not know what to do, though there's plenty of work for her at our Red Cross station. But, I guess, she would rather be with her girl scouts"

"Send her to me," Mrs. Rawska smiled "I'll have a job for her."

A couple of blocks farther on I ran into "Anna Mary," the Swiss proprietress of a magnificent dry goods and clothing store in the neighborhood

"Can I do anything for you?" she asked

"What can you give us?" I replied, suppressing my excitement.

"Some linen, perhaps... Nurses' white uniforms"

"Anything," I stammered. "We need it so badly."

"I'll see what I can do," she said, smiling, as she disappeared inside her store. She emerged after a while, followed by another, and laden with piles of goods. There were forty nurses' uniforms, towels, sweaters and three sheets, with a promise of more to come. With profuse thanks I departed, carrying a bundle as large as I could handle.

A house was burning on Warecka Street. Two women were up on the roof, tearing it down, while men were down in the street, passing buckets of water from hand to hand, trying to extinguish the flames. I trudged on to the barricade on Nowy Swiat.

A man was wobbling along toward me. He carried some clothes, which would slip out of his uncertain embrace

every few steps Whenever he bent down to pick up one garment, another would drop to the street. He pushed his hat back on his head and wiped off his perspiring forehead, looking around helplessly. The boys on the barricade nearby roared with laughter.

I came up, picked up the clothes, rolled them in a bundle and stuck it firmly under his arm

"Whatever do you think you are doing, gracious lady?" he hiccupped "I've just had my clothes pressed, and now they'll be all...yick, yick...all wrinkled." He turned on me a sorrowful, though bloodshot, eye

"That's all right," I reassured him "Wrinkled or not, you will at least have your clothes if you carry them that way"

"Permit me, madame," he addressed me in stentorian tones that made the boys on the barricade roll with laughter "Permit me, madame... yick, yick... to introduce myself My name's Kupalski... yick, yick... Kupalski, I said .. One of the Kupalski Brothers.. if you ever need me, madame... yick, yick... I am your obedient servant... yick... everything at your disposal..."

I reported to Command 2/4, and showed Lieutenant Pobog my orders from Colonel Matylda. "Sweeper lost two men this morning," he announced. "One wounded and one killed."

Zofia, at the Red Cross station, gave me the details One of our boys went out too far beyond the corner, toward the University. They shot him in the spine. Another one went to rescue him, and he was shot in the leg, but brought his fatally wounded comrade to die at the station. Zofia knew the dead man's wife, who was a nurse in another sector of the city.

"Please tell her," the man whispered his last to Zofia, "that I loved her very much."

After some conferences with the women from our block about the setting up of a field kitchen, I started out for our posts on Dobra Street to check on the nurses and liaison girls there. The route led through an underground passage to House No 9 on Leszczynska Street

No. 9 was the apple of our eye Sergeant Putkowski nestled there with his heavy machine gun and a good deal of ammunition. He had his own crew and commanded them with an iron, though fatherly, hand, ever mindful of having been a regular army sergeant before 1939. When the war in Poland had ended in October, 1939, Putkowski took off his uniform, put some moth flakes in it, and packed it away. He dismantled his machine gun, cleaned it thoroughly, wrapped up each part in oil-soaked cloths, gathered as much ammunition as he could lay his hands on and walled it all up in the cellar under his grocery store. On August 1, 1944, Putkowski and his crew tore down the wall which they had erected five years before and took out the machine gun, ammunition and his uniform. They turned it against the German garrison, at the University, and what a source of joy it was to us!

Dobra Street bristled with barricades. I was bound for Lieutenant Viktor's post, which was under almost constant enemy fire from four sides. Lieutenant Viktor was not one to lose heart over this fact. He had plenty of men and enough arms. Around his headquarters at 53 Dobra Street he created a "safety zone," though I had my own doubts as to whether the name fitted the situation. He had strewn flat cans of explosives on Dobra Street within a 100-yard radius.

"To say 'hello' to the German tanks when they come a-visiting," he explained.

They had started work that morning on another barricade near the post, but it proved to be a tough job.

Every once in a while German tanks would come close to the site of the barricade and sow death and destruction all around. I got to the post on Dobra Street during a lull in the fighting.

"Whew!" Lieutenant Viktor mopped off his dirty face "You're bringing us good luck. The first respite in two and a half days"

A man lying in a shallow ditch was digging the earth with a small shovel where the barricade was to rise. But first the cobblestones had to be plucked out of the pavement, a most perilous business where one had to work without cover

Crouching close to the wall, I was waiting for Greta, the liaison girl of this sector. Viktor stood near by, watching the soldier in the hollow throwing up dirt.

Viktor cursed under his breath as he glanced toward Karowa Street whose fire was the most pernicious. A small hand tugged at his sleeve. Viktor looked down and saw Little Peter, from No. 51. Ever since the beginning of the Uprising, Little Peter had been making himself generally helpful. He belonged to the boy scouts who operated Warsaw's postal system in those days. Little Peter had been befriended by the soldier who was now digging the street for the barricade. The soldier was called Big Peter, being some seven years older than his smaller chum.

"We've got to hurry with that barricade," Little Peter told Lieutenant Viktor. "The Krauts might come any minute." He pulled up his pants and wiped his nose with his hand.

"They might," Viktor agreed curtly. "We can't do it any faster. Big Peter's working at it."

Little Peter spat on the sidewalk and put his hands on his hips. He threw back his head to look straight into Viktor's eyes.

"I'll help Big Peter," he declared.

Startled, Lieutenant Viktor looked down at the boy.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll pluck out the cobblestones from the street. Then Big Peter will be able to dig faster."

"All right, Peter. But you've got to ask your own superior. And, well, it's not an easy job. You won't have any cover, you know."

Little Peter grinned from ear to ear, and flew back to the house where his boy scout chief was.

He came back in a flash, his freckled face alight with eagerness.

"I can go, sir," he called. "My mother let me go, too."

Little Peter's mother was the air-raid warden for this block.

Viktor glanced once more toward Karowa Street. It was still quiet there. "The lull might keep up for some time," he thought. "After all, it's no more of a risk than a thousand other things we are doing."

"All right, Little Peter, you may go now," he said. He made a gesture as if to stroke the boy's tousled head, but withdrew his hand quickly. One does not pat a soldier. "Don't stay there too long," he said.

"Just twelve cobblestones, sir. Let me get twelve."

Little Peter crawled from the gate to the center of the street, one house beyond ours, where Big Peter was digging. We saw him nestle there, at the soldier's side, and go to work.

Viktor engaged in an animated discussion with one of his men. Since the shooting had stopped, except for the cannon along the Vistula whose shells whizzed over our heads on their way to the Old City, I could catch scraps of their conversation.

"There is no question about it," Viktor was saying. "It's a new era that'll begin when this war is over. I doubt whether the nations will ever fall out again after

what they've gone through together to beat Germany."

"You believe then in the coming brotherhood of nations?" the man's voice was tinged with doubt.

"Of course," replied Viktor hotly.

"And in peace with Russia?"

"Of course," Viktor repeated.

"Why don't they help us then?" The man gestured toward the Vistula, where silence reigned along the Russian front. Then he looked up and pointed to the skies where German planes alone held sway.

"I don't know," Viktor said. "Perhaps they can't just now. But they will. You'll see, they will."

I shifted uneasily. The man's question bothered me, too. I knew that our High Command had sent repeated appeals to the Soviets asking them for arms and ammunition and supplies, but so far without results.

The lookout in the window of the third-floor apartment shouted

"The tanks!"

Everybody scattered for cover.

Big Peter and Little Peter left their work and began to crawl toward safety. As if on a signal, the German cannon and machine guns opened fire. The street was ablaze. The dust of the chipped walls got into our lungs. Stones and bricks flew in all directions. I heard Viktor give instruction to his men what to do in the event that the Germans crossed the line of mines laid on the street.

Big Peter swerved suddenly. A fountain of earth and stones burst over him and, coming down, smothered him completely.

Little Peter kept on crawling.

"Mother!" he called, and a woman's voice from our side answered desperately: "Peter! My boy!"

Lieutenant Viktor ran out to drag Little Peter in. He brought the boy and laid him on the stones. The woman

threw herself down. She caught Peter's small, dirty hands and pressed them to her breast.

"Peter, Peter," she sobbed

I knelt to examine the wound. A huge gash was opened in Little Peter's neck. The boy was conscious, his eyes wide open, a slight half-smile on his freckled face

"Gosh, only nine stones," he said. "They wouldn't let me, the swine . . . Mummy!"

Little Peter closed his eyes.

WE CAN'T do it tomorrow," I said to Zofia who was preparing to give typhoid injections in the morning "Don't you know what's brewing tonight?"

"No, though Sweeper acted very mysterious this afternoon"

"There's going to be a large-scale attack on the University at 4 45 A.M.," I said, tingling with excitement at the prospect of the first major offensive by the Home Army in our section of the city. But nothing ever upset Zofia's equilibrium.

The University was a painful thorn in our side, with its strong German battalions. The University grounds were five blocks long and three wide. Several units of the Home Army were mobilized for the attack, which was to come from all four sides. The boys of our command were to strike from Obozna Street, take the machine-gun nest that had bothered us so much these days, and rush the German defenses from the rear. Lieutenant Viktor, of Dobra Street, was to make a flank attack from the Browarna side.

At 10:00 P.M. the first units began to gather at our post. They came from various sectors. Some thirty nurses arrived, with stretchers, first-aid kits and dressings.

Our Red Cross station was tightly packed, but unusually quiet. People spoke only in whispers. I put the girls up as best I could in the three rooms adjoining the station and ordered them to go to sleep. I was to be on duty until the hour of attack.

"I can't sleep, anyway," Zofia said. "I'll stay with you"

I gave myself a shot of caffeine to ward off sleepiness. There was no coffee to drink.

At two o'clock in the morning the first group of men got ready to leave under orders to steal their way right to the University walls, and wait there for H-hour. We synchronized our watches. Their shoes wrapped in rags, the soldiers walked noiselessly. I accompanied them as far as the barricade on our street.

The night was growing long with waiting. It was pitch black and soft. The fires burning on Gesta Street were dying out. In vain did I strain my eyes to see the dark patches of the vegetable gardens through which our first units were to crawl. I returned to the station.

Doctor Falecki, the surgeon, came in quietly and took possession of Zofia immediately. She moved around silently, arranging and putting things away. Water was boiling in the sterilizers. Zofia touched my shoulder.

"It's three-forty," she whispered. "Time to wake up the girls."

I walked through the three small rooms where the thirty nurses were sleeping soundly on the floor, huddled close together, and called in a low voice. "Get up! Time to get up!"

They woke up instantly, without a yawn, without a complaint. We checked our kits: scissors, gauze, bandages, dressings, iodine, tape, candles and matches. We wore gray overalls and dark berets, but no insignia. The white of our armbands we turned in so that only the red showed. We took five stretchers with us, one for each group of six.

Zofia made the sign of the cross in the air after us as we filed out.

Soon we were crawling up the slopes of vegetable gardens over dew-covered plants. It was difficult to crawl in the dark through cabbage heads and tomato stalks. I felt the stickiness of the caterpillars I was crushing, and their green blood between my fingers. The girl ahead of

me stopped for a moment Her shoe hit me squarely in the face But I suppressed the cry in my throat. We crawled on and on I thought it would never end.

Finally we got to the two-story building, some two hundred yards from the German machine-gun nests, where the nurses were to stay until needed. Our hearts were pounding. Our eyes tried to pierce the darkness Our ears throbbed with the silence of the night

Suddenly an explosion rent the blackness The boys ran forward with their scissors to cut the barbed wires They had to hurry to surprise the Germans Our grenades now ringed the University.

The German machine guns began to talk. A few stray bullets came our way. Voices were now heard Our men took the rear gate, and made for the machine-gun nest.

"Hurrah!"

The machine gun was in our hands. We ran out of our building to join the soldiers, but quickly we had to hug the ground. The Germans opened mortar fire.

Yanosik worked on the machine gun. With the help of others he now trained it upon the Germans. Yanosik laughed as the machine gun began her song There was plenty of ammunition for it, too From a case near by ribbons of cartridges were spilling out.

There were already a few wounded. One boy had a bullet in the chest. He was conscious. He pressed his hand against the wound and crawled toward us. Three nurses crawled out to meet him and pull him beyond the radius of fire We had to drag him on the cobblestones, shrinking inside at the thought of his suffering. Although we were covered fairly well by Yanosik's machine gun, there was also the danger of getting hit by our own grenades.

Those too wounded to walk we put on stretchers. Two on a stretcher, we carried them quickly to the Red Cross

station through the vegetable gardens. We did not have to crawl now, for our boys kept the Germans too busy in their lair.

I found Doctor Falecki and Zofia hard at work on some soldiers from other groups who had been brought in first. We deposited our men and ran back with our stretchers to University Hill where the battle kept on. We lay down on the ground near our soldiers.

"Jesus!" someone groaned behind me. I jumped up and made a dash to his side. I saw him standing up, but before I reached him he tumbled heavily, like a sack of flour. Good Lord, what a wound! His leg was practically blown off at the groin. Two soldiers took our stretcher and carried him on the run down the hill. We crawled up to the first line of fighting to pick up three more of our men who lay there.

A pale rim of dawn was moving up the sky as I knelt over a youth crying from unbearable pain. I felt his blood soaking through my overalls. My temples throbbed with an urge to kill.

The sky grew lighter. Another sunny summer day was coming. And then we heard the distant growl of motors overhead. The German planes were coming, too. A liaison girl ran up the hill. Panting, she delivered a message to Yanosik: Orders to withdraw.

The machine gun was still spitting at the Germans when Yanosik grabbed the case of ammunition and turned back. The withdrawal proceeded quietly under the cover of machine-gun fire. We crouched behind a wooden fence of the garage on the next corner, where a large number of wounded had been brought and laid on the ground. We worked with feverish haste, but there were too few of us to attend to them all. Sweat dimmed my eyes. I opened the collar of my overalls.

"One more coming," the nurse at my elbow said. Her

voice was dull from weariness. The last soldiers were carrying another stretcher. I went over to find that they had brought a man and a nurse. The stretcher-bearers eased their load on the ground and mopped their foreheads.

"What's the matter with her?"

"Dunno," one of the soldiers said. "We found her lying out there, and picked her up."

"Take them to the Red Cross station."

"Yes, madame."

The white walls of our station were splashed with blood, and the moans of the wounded, as I entered, blended into one dreadful, continuous howl which neither our ears nor our hearts could long endure. The nurse died before the doctor could get to her. A burst of shrapnel had ripped her abdomen. Nothing could have saved her.

Doctor Falecki worked rapidly and silently, going from one wounded man to the other, Zofia following him automatically, like a shadow. He would put on the first dressings and then let nurses carry the worst casualties on stretchers to the nearest hospitals. We had many wounded. Sweeper's Unit Two alone had lost seven men. I went with the last stretcher. On my return trip, I joined a group of our men. Sweeper was there, and Yanosik and Sparrow. They looked tired and downhearted. Together we walked back to our post.

"Where's your brother?" I asked Sweeper.

"Wounded," he waved his hand in the general direction of the hospital.

"Lynx, the Polish Achilles," Yanosik snickered. "His heel's been shot off."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Lynx is not the worst of it," Sparrow spoke up. "They mowed our boys down at the main entrance. Colonel Lis was killed. And we could not even recover Lieutenant

Krych's body He fell right at the pillbox, and we can't get to him now."

It was only yesterday that we had fought shoulder to shoulder with Lieutenant Krych and his men at the Social Insurance Institute I swallowed hard

I stretched out on the cot and closed my eyes, trying to rest But it was futile. Blood was under my lids, and I could not avoid the sight of it The tears of the youth who had cried up there, on University Hill, flooded my brain in a hot, scalding wave. Dumb with the pain of the many bodies I had seen quartered and torn, I lay there, straining my ears for the blessed sound of the Russian cannon from the East, from across the Vistula. But silence reigned there, silence more dreadful than hell.

Small, warm, tiny hands caressed my cheek, and a blonde pigtail tickled me under the nose. Barbarka brought me a glass of hot tea.

"Mummy," she reported, "Yanosik says they're afraid to make a sortie from the University."

He was there, standing over my cot, impudent as ever

"Are you too tired to think?" he asked.

No, I could still think I was just too tired to speak

"You know what, Aneri?"

"What?" I said, and brightened up a bit, seeing that I could speak after all. One had to brighten up whenever Yanosik was around One couldn't help it. Yanosik was full of fun and good advice He never failed to turn up in the most dangerous spot, but did not think of himself as brave.

"You ought to appreciate the wonderful idea Uncle Yanosik's going to put in your head," he suggested

"Well?"

"Did you see the vegetables up near the University wall?"

"Perfectly." I shuddered at the memory of the worms

I had squashed as I crawled through the garden in the night.

"There are some tomatoes there," Yanosik said dreamily. "Some of them are ripe, I think. I ate one, but did not have time to pick good ones. But there are some, though. Vitamins, Aneri, vitamins."

"Confound you!" I sighed. "We'll have to go and get some then."

Colonel Matylda, to whom I reported at Headquarters after two hours of sleepless "rest," looked drawn and thinner than the day before. Our heavy losses were weighing upon us all. She entrusted me with an urgent mission to Lieutenant Valeria at the Polytechnic, situated in the southern part of the city.

"I'm going to call your commanding officer," she said, "and tell him you won't be back tonight. It should take you quite a while to get down there. And it won't be pleasant."

"I hope I'll hear some good news in the southern sector," I remarked, slinging my courier-bag over my shoulder and turning to go.

"Oh, but I forgot!" The colonel stopped me with a gesture. "There is good news, Aneri, and I meant to tell you. A Soviet officer, a Captain Kalugin, has just reached our Headquarters in Warsaw."

I came back to her desk. My eyes, I felt, grew round with excitement.

"How did he come? Does it mean we're getting help from the Soviets? Will the Red Army attack Warsaw?"

"I don't know myself, but I think help is near."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed.

"You look as if you had a nice brand-new pair of wings to fly with," Colonel Matylda smiled. "You might have to use them shortly, too. On Sikorski Avenue."

Warsaw's bloodiest barricade was on Sikorski Avenue,

cutting across one of our widest streets, over a railroad tunnel still held by the Germans. It had been a grim and almost superhuman task to build it. German tanks attacked the barricade several times daily, partially destroying it. It was always rebuilt, mostly with sandbags, and at an ever-mounting cost.

"Hey! Are you deaf, dumb and blind? Don't you hear the cow? Take cover."

How the ear-drilling sound of the "shrieking cow" escaped my notice I do not know. The "shrieking cow" was the most terrifying of all the weapons the Germans used against the Home Army in Warsaw. It was like a mortar, wound up with a spring, spitting out six shells one after another, all hitting one spot. The shells looked like long and narrow boxes. They were filled with incendiary material that engulfed a house they hit with a sea of flame which spread rapidly to the adjoining buildings. There was no defense against the "shrieking cow." We could hear the whine of the huge spring as it was wound up, but there was no telling which way the six shells would fly. The people who happened to be in the vicinity of the "cow's" target were burned with the liquid fire carried by the shells. This was the most terrifying aspect of the new German weapon which, it was rumored, had been devised by Hitler himself. I have seen people with flat faces whose noses or ears had been melted away by a "shrieking cow." A piece of flesh would be burnt away, as if sliced off, but without bleeding. The "melted" people suffered unspeakable tortures as they were burned alive. A few, with their bodies disfigured, their faces hideous to look at, escaped death.

The officer at our barricade on Sikorski Avenue looked at my papers, glanced at my face, shrugged his shoulders, and, without a word, led me to a door with an iron grille opening toward the barricade. Still without a word, he motioned to me to look through the opening. I drew back

trembling from shock. A knot of human bodies, dead or live I knew not, but motionless and bloody, lay in front of the demolished part of the barricade.

"This is the last batch that tried to get through to the southern sector," the officer observed. There was a note of indifference in his voice that hurt. "You'll have to wait till dark, Lieutenant Aneri."

The even-numbered side of Sikorski Avenue and only part of the opposite side were in our hands. But the big building of the Bank of Home Management was still held by the Germans, whose fire gave us little respite.

The balcony of the second floor of the house near the barricade had been transformed by our men into a "pill-box" of wooden planks. On a mattress laid in the doorway to the balcony a boy was lying on his belly, reading a book and munching a bit of bread crust. A gun was at his side.

"You've got to cross, too?" he asked, as I sat down near him. I nodded, and glanced at his book.

"You have time to read here?"

"Damn the whole lousy lot of them!" was his reply.

"Right! But how you manage to read here is beyond me."

"Well, there aren't enough of 'em to shoot at all the time, not within my range. But I got sixteen of them already."

He pointed to his gun. There were sixteen notches on it.

From the direction of the bank a huge worm of a German tank came clattering toward the barricade. I yelled, grabbed the boy by the shirt and pulled him back into the room, as the explosion hit the balcony. Part of the wall on the right of the balcony crumbled. Blinded and deafened, I stood there, unable to open my eyes. Someone brought me water and washed my face. Squinting, I looked at the naked balcony where the "pillbox"

had been. Two of our boys were standing at the entrance, grenades in hand.

Surely, swiftly moved their arms. They rose together, took a swing and hurled the balls of destruction. The house shook again. Someone caught me in his arms and kissed me soundly on both cheeks. Someone else danced a war dance in the middle of the wrecked room. Down in the street another German tank was afire, dying amid bursts of explosions.

Downstairs, inside the gate, officers, liaison girls and nurses had been hopefully waiting for hours for a signal to cross. Finally, the gate opened and two soldiers crawled out to remove the dead from the barricade. In the courtyard, men were already digging a grave. We formed a conveyor line. The first body to pass through our hands was that of a woman. With the aid of a flashlight I could see she was young. Her light hair fell in blood-caked strands on her face. The officer on duty took out her identification card and read: "Alina—Group I—Liaison." Alina had a bulky sealed envelope on her, and he took this, too.

Altogether seven corpses were brought in from the barricade. We wrapped their bodies in sheets and tablecloths, supplied by the tenants of the house. There was no time and no lumber to make coffins.

While we were burying the dead, soldiers were repairing the barricade under the cover of night. And then at last the officer on duty signaled to us that we could cross in small groups at short intervals. When my turn came, I threw off my sleepiness and ran. I fell into the outstretched hands of our sentries on the other side of the barricade, and found myself in a basement. My overalls were sticking to my perspiring back.

"Well, you made it all right!" a voice addressed me in the dark, and a friendly hand gave me a pat on the back.

"Yes, I made it," my voice was shaky "Thanks"

"Where are you going?"

"To the Polytechnic," I answered

"Hmm, a long way," the voice spoke laconically, and added, "Keep to the left Then they'll show you how to get from there, though there are arrows and directions written everywhere, anyway."

As I plunged into the intricate underground passages of Warsaw, I soon began to shiver with the chill of the cellars I followed the turns from arrow to arrow, from light to light, from mark to mark All along the route soldiers of our Security Corps were on duty to "keep the traffic rolling."

Both sides of the narrow passages running through the subterranean labyrinth were jammed with chairs, tables and beds on which people were at that hour, 5 30 A M, trying to sleep Their faces were gray with the mould of the caves they rotted in. Their eyes were poignant, watchful, inquiring They were the eyes of people who had given up everything and suffered in dreadful silence, with clenched teeth and tearless hearts Nursing women and pregnant women, old women who could hardly move or talk, children and aged men, sick and feeble, were all huddled here Condemned to darkness, to waiting and to nothingness, they crouched alongside the damp walls, not quite alive, and not yet dead, following us, the couriers and officers of the Home Army moving through the narrow passages as if we were already the free messengers of the sun and air up above.

As I went from tunnel to tunnel, I became sick myself from looking at the parchment-faced cave dwellers with their silent mouths and their shouting eyes I ran as fast as I could, and twice I stumbled against pipes and fell flat on my face. When I finally emerged in the open, I was determined never again to descend into the catacombs if I could help it

"What are the chances, soldier, of getting through this street to the Polytechnic?" I asked the first sentry. A typical Warsaw urchin of the barricades, he nonchalantly inspected his fingernails as he paused to consider my question.

"The chances? Not so bad," he announced phlegmatically. "That is, if you're good at catching balls."

Ready to duck instantly, I proceeded on my last lap, hugging the walls of the houses, and passing a barricade built around an overturned trolley car. The darkness was lifting, and the sun rose above the horizon when I reached the Polytechnic.

Lieutenant Valeria, blinking from lack of sleep, read the orders which I brought her from Colonel Matylida while I drank a cup of very sweet barley coffee.

"We are hungry," said Valeria after carefully folding Matylida's letter. "We have nothing but grits, and a few sacks of unground wheat. And this is a large post. There are over a thousand people here."

We went to see the quartermaster then. I found that he was Lieutenant Bartosh, an old acquaintance.

"We are now building a mill to grind whatever wheat we have," Lieutenant Bartosh told me. "But I don't know, of course, how long we'll have the electricity. We have no other food supplies, and we did not even get any cigarettes. And, to add to our own troubles, we have some hundred prisoners of war that we have to feed, too."

"Do you make good use of them?"

"Well, yes," and he pointed to the huge yard where German prisoners were chopping wood, repairing the wells, and carrying some heavy cases.

"Why don't you make them build barricades?"

"N-n-n-o-o," I noticed some reluctance in Bartosh's voice. "You see, our High Command says that we can't use German methods in dealing with our prisoners and

that we've got to stick to the provisions of the Geneva Convention"

"How about Gestapo-men and SS-men?" I persisted "Do you pamper them, too?"

The face of Lieutenant Bartosh became hard and implacable, and his voice cold.

"The Gestapo-men and the SS-men we kill like dogs, on the spot. Yesterday we executed seven of them here. No international law can possibly apply to them. And no mercy, for they had none."

It was the sixth day when I returned to my post, the sixth day of the Uprising which was to last four to five days until the arrival of the Russians. More and more tormenting became the question: When will help from the East come? Now that the Soviet Captain Kalugin was in Warsaw, I figured, we should be getting, any day, machine guns and anti-tank weapons and plenty of ammunition, of shells and cartridges. But why, oh why, was the help so slow in coming? Had we been blinding ourselves with mirages? Was Poland going to lose one more battle to the Germans, the climactic Battle of Warsaw?

To meet the threat of our dwindling supplies, we organized community kitchens in which all available provisions were pooled. The sewing circles throughout the city worked unremittingly for the Home Army. Barbarka was most active in our neighborhood circle, having secured eleven Singer machines and many volunteers for it. In addition, she helped at the Red Cross station, sterilizing dressings and mending soldiers' socks—a task which she detested. She was also lending a hand to the postal service which was entirely run by boy and girl scouts. The mailboxes which for five years had been marked *Deutsche Post Osten* now bore a trefoil inscribed *Polish Scout Mail*.

Troubled by the food shortage at the Polytechnic, I turned for relief to the Convent of the Ursuline Sisters on Tamka Street, near our post. I had exchanged goods with them before. The Ursuline Sisters maintained a school, an orphanage and a large hospital. How they had managed to conceal their supplies of flour from the all-seeing eyes of the Germans will remain forever their own secret. When the Uprising broke out they baked bread in their large ovens and gave it to the local Home Army units without any charge whatsoever. The "Ursuline" loaves were long, large, and almost white.

In the basements of the convent were two large shelters, sanitary and well-appointed, crowded with people. The hospital wards, too, were overflowing. The Sisters had a few thousand homeless inmates on their hands. Day or night nuns toiled in the big kitchen over steaming cauldrons of food for the multitudes.

When I asked for bread for our starving boys at the Polytechnic, I had expected the Sister Superior to exclaim that it was impossible to bake for a thousand people more. Instead, she merely jotted down the number.

"The flour doesn't stretch the way it should," she murmured. "But it won't be very long now, will it?" Her faded, blue eyes looked at me inquiringly. I kissed her old hands, roughened by hard work, and left without answering the question.

As soon as I returned to the station, I sensed Zofia's radiancy. It appeared that her son, Voytek, had come to see her while on a few hours' leave from his post.

"We had dinner together," Zofia told me. "Such a good meal, too."

"What did you give him, Zofia? I didn't know you were hoarding anything special."

"Oh, but I wasn't hoarding, I wasn't," said Zofia, flushed. "You know it was just a bit, a wee bit of butter

I was saving for mother No more than a spoonful, really. But real butter."

"How is your mother?"

"She's all right," Zofia answered, and I saw a shadow cross her happy face "That is, she's as well as an eighty-year-old woman can be living down in the cellar under these conditions But, something's wrong there, Aneri, and I can sense it every time I go to see mother, there's something in the atmosphere that's different from all other cellars. People are sullen, desperate. You'll see when you look into it, Aneri"

That very night I went down to the basement of 25 Topiel Street, and weaving my way carefully among the limp bodies of the sleepers I reached the wall where Zofia's mother was lying on her mattress She was beautiful to look at, and her ripe old age only emphasized the serenity of her soul.

I sat down on the edge of her mattress, stretching my tired legs so as to span a long-haired head and the back of a snoring body.

"Is something wrong here in your cellar?" I asked, intimating that I had heard rumors about it

"Yes, my dear. There is unrest here, and I think it emanates from a strange couple who came here not very long ago. They are telling people such dreadful things, my dear."

"What are they telling people?"

"One bit of nonsense or another. They say that the Uprising has been provoked by the British, so that we would pull their chestnuts out of the fire with our bare hands, and that the Soviets will never help us Not a chance, they say, and claim that the Russians have some sort of secret agreement with the Germans to let us all die here unless we surrender."

The couple was soon removed from the cellar, and our

Security Corps took the matter in hand. It was quickly established that they were a pair of German spies whose mission was to sow despair and spread panic among the civilian population. They met swift justice.

THE BOMBERS that often flew over our heads, without dropping their loads upon us, were bound for *Stare Miasto*, the Old Town on the banks of the Vistula, and so were the shells of the German artillery. For eight days the strategic Old Town adjoining our district of Powisle in the north had been under constant fire and in the thick of battle. Its defenders could not last much longer without sleep or rest. To relieve them a call for volunteers was issued all over the city, for soldiers, nurses and liaison girls. We knew that once the Old Town fell, the days of our own district would be numbered, and that its lot today would be ours tomorrow.

Sweeper smiled broadly when he saw me getting ready to go.

"Good," he said. "It'll be jollier with you along, Aneri."

To reach the Old Town from Topiel Street in the pre-historic days before the Uprising was a matter of a short leisurely walk. In twenty minutes one could get to the ancient Cathedral of St. John. Or one could promenade to the Old Market Place to feed the pigeons there. Or one could go late at night, after a ball, to the Fukier wine cellars where generation after generation of Fukiers had boasted of serving the choicest wines in all Warsaw.

But this was August 9, 1944. All the usual routes were barred by German forces. There was only one safe road to the Old Town: through the sewers.

Before the Uprising, as far as I know, the Home Army never used the sewers as passages. The first time I ever heard of their use for military operations was during the Battle of the Ghetto. Many Jews escaped through the sewers. When the Germans discovered their underground

lanes, they inundated and gassed them, killing hundreds in flight. This was in April, 1943, and we could not forget it. Neither did we forget the last appeal of Michal Klepfisz, the young leader of the Ghetto, to his people. Michal Klepfisz was posthumously awarded by the President of Poland the *Virtuti Militari*, our highest military decoration. The Home Army could not rise at the time of the Battle of the Ghetto, as there was no chance of victory. The Red Army was far away, and so was the prospect of liberation. The few sad-eyed survivors of the Battle of the Ghetto told us then: "The same things will happen to you, only a little later, you'll see. You have two years, maybe." We remembered the words. And the same things did happen—fifteen months later.

The entrance to the sewers that led to the Old Town was near the Napoleon Café. When we got there, we found a large group of nurses, soldiers and liaison girls waiting. A soldier who had come up from the Old Town was to guide us. He looked tough and was armed to the teeth, with a few grenades dangling at his belt, and a brand-new Sten gun. He was bareheaded, his trousers were rolled up above his knotty knees, and he wore a German military coat. Altogether he looked both ridiculous and heroic, and I could not make up my mind which was more striking.

We, too, rolled up our trousers as high as we could and went down a narrow ladder of iron rods. I had the feeling of descending into a grave, but the laughs and jokes of the others reassured me somewhat. Above, from the round patch of daylight, I heard the voice of the commanding officer in charge of the post.

"Hurry up! Have you lost your legs? Snails are faster than you. Hurry up! The Germans may come up, then you'll be sitting pretty."

Finally everybody scrambled in.

The sewers at this point were high enough for us to walk in, though we had to bend down. The pipe ran

straight ahead. It was dark. Contrary to my fears, the sewers seemed dry and the stench did not seem too bad at first. We moved forward in a single file. I was cold and shivering, and yet I felt sweat rolling in drops down my face and neck. Danuta and Sparrow were directly ahead of me, Yanosik and Golecz right behind me.

After what seemed like a long time, the sewers enlarged so that we could straighten up and even walk in pairs. Our eyes got used to the darkness, and I saw Danuta and Sparrow getting close together as they walked, side by side, their hands clasped tightly. Phosphorescent arrows on the walls pointed our way wherever the sewers forked.

And then it grew worse with every step. The pipes narrowed again, and we had to breathe the filthy air. That hateful stench, sticking to our clothes and in our hair, filled our throats and our mouths with nausea. I heard someone behind me vomit, and only with great effort managed not to do the same. The roadway now dropped, and the sewers became so small that we had to get down on all fours, and crawl ahead like monkeys, our hands and our knees and our feet ankle-deep in dirt and human excrement, our faces smeared with filth.

"Brrr! At least I don't have to see it" I tried to keep up courage by joking, but could not.

Yanosik kept up a stream of talk behind me, and croaked authoritatively: "A man stinks like that when there's no soul left in him any more."

"Do you claim to have a soul, O, Beardless One?" a voice answered, letting the implication sink deep into Yanosik's guileless conscience.

"It is not I that stinketh, methinks," retorted Yanosik. "Fie, sir, you ought to be ashamed even to raise your impudent voice."

Left hand ahead, then right hand, then slowly, not to splash dirt on the face of the man behind, left foot drawn in, then the right one... Endless seemed this pattern of

crawling in the foul scum. The straps of the heavy rucksack cut deep into my shoulders. My back ached. My heart pounded from exertion, and blood flooded my brain. One could not stop crawling for a moment. It was worse than being in a tomb. A sense of unbearable weariness was overcoming me. The rucksack kept sliding down and pressing on the nape of my neck, and I could do nothing about it. Danuta moved too fast ahead of me, and a wet, stinking piece hit my face. What was there to do but continue the monkey steps, left hand, right hand, left foot, right foot. But it could not last much longer. A few more steps, and I would fall flat on my face, and die there, drowned in slime.

"Quite a family tomb they prepared for us," someone sneered, "but—damn them—they forgot to take the refuse out."

Three and a half hours passed before I saw a crescent of light. Those ahead of me were climbing up the ladder already.

"Krasinski Square," someone sighed.

I started up the ladder. Strong hands from above seized me under the shoulders and pulled me up, into the sunshine, but I could not see it. My eyes were bloodshot from the strain of crawling with my head bent. We all stood there for a brief moment, shielding our eyes with our filthy hands. Then we were led away, before the German planes could come and spot us.

We found ourselves in a very large basement, obviously the storeroom of a big commercial house. Several hundred people were lying, fast asleep, on mats and mattresses spread on the floor. They must have been dead tired, for our entrance did not wake them. They all wore the red-and-white armbands of the Home Army.

The urge to tear off my clothes and wash myself was so great that I began to cry. Water was precious in the

Old Town and had to be rationed even for us. I was nauseous.

"Here, drink this," a man said, and he poured down my throat a glassful of water with mint in it. I swallowed and brightened up. With my mouth refreshed, I looked at my savior. He was nothing but a collection of bones, somehow held together to form a long, lean body. He resembled Don Quixote so much that I could never think of him under any other name.

Someone thrust a piece of chocolate in my hand, muttering, "Here, have some. We got lots of it from the Germans."

I held up the chocolate, and my nausea returned. Then Don Quixote gave me another glass of mint water, and this time it really put me on my feet. I felt well enough to answer questions about the situation in my district of Powisle and in the center of the city. The defenders of the Old Town were full of hope and cocksure of themselves.

"As long as we can get some sleep once in a while, everything will be well," they said. "We'll hold on, don't worry, until the Russians come."

We reported to the head nurse of the hospital established since the Uprising in Fukier's wine cellars, and found about a hundred nurses there swaying on their feet from overwork and lack of sleep. Don Quixote was there, too. It appeared that he was one of the doctors. Our contingent took over the wards from the Old Town nurses. There was plenty of work, but everything was well organized. No one was panicky in the Old Town. The cellars were so deep and the walls so thick that the racket of fire and bombs hardly reached us.

In a corner there was a bed in which a man lay covered with a fancy pink honeymoonish blanket pulled over his

head To find out what was the matter with him, I raised one edge of the blanket. Before me was the peaceful, sleeping face of Scholar

Scholar did not wake up. No one was around except Don Quixote, who had sent everyone else off to sleep, without leaving the ward himself.

"Won't you sit down for a second, doctor?" I suggested mildly "I do want to know about Scholar "

"The ideal!" he scoffed "Fine time you pick for your flirtations!" Growling, he sat down after I introduced myself I learned that he was a colonel, a surgeon, and quickly perceived that he was only acting the part of a savage He knew Scholar quite well, and had heard about me from him, too

"Is the big brute in love with you?" he asked

"But no!" I protested vehemently "We worked together for a long time, that's all "

Don Quixote seemed sceptical He told me that Scholar was not really wounded, but had two ribs broken during the bombardment of the Crooked Circle when he tried to rescue a woman from under the debris of her house. Then, in speaking of "Christopher's men" in the Old Town, he mentioned Andrew

"Andrew? Where is he?" I asked eagerly.

"How do I know? I can think of better jobs than being Andrew's keeper Probably fast asleep under some fancy pink blanket " He winked at me, and his wink looked strange in his dead-pan face. "Oh well, he may be on a patrol, too, for all I know," he ended, under my withering glance. He got up and waved his hand as if to indicate how much work there was for us Then he turned and asked casually: "You knew Lucia, too, no doubt?"

His voice was a bit too casual, it struck me afterwards

"Why, of course. Is Lucia here, too?"

"No," he said sharply and shrugged his shoulders "I guess you'll be talking to Scholar He'll tell you all the

news," he said in a voice which was disturbingly calm. But Don Quixote did not look at me. He walked away, and his long, noiseless steps carried him to the far end of the ward.

A new transport of wounded arrived, and we had to work hard. But a persistent thought pestered me: "Lucia, where is she? Why didn't he tell me?" I could not drive away a premonition of evil, a strange feeling to have when people were falling around you like leaves in the autumn.

Don Quixote did not go to sleep. He was right there, at the makeshift "operating table" with the other doctors. They had dressings and bandages and serums at the Old Town hospitals, but no anesthetics. The operations were performed just the same. You could watch your leg being cut off by skillful hands until you fainted away, and felt happier in half-death than in life.

They brought a young girl there and laid her on the operating table. Her hair was white, or perhaps it seemed so from the ashes of the burning house where they found her. Her face, too, was as white as the Host. Don Quixote took the sharp surgical saw in his hand. Two doctors and nurses gathered around the table. They had to amputate the girl's crushed leg. There was no other way. Hopelessness swept over me, and I longed suddenly for Scholar's quiet assurance, and his strong friendship, such as a man can give.

Scholar would not wake up. After repeated attempts on my part to bring him to consciousness, he opened one eye, and growled savagely: "Damn it! Won't you let me alone?"

He closed his eye again and was fast asleep before one could count three.

"Scholar, please," I whispered, "please, wake up. I can't wait any longer."

He sat up then, quite conscious, without opening his eyes, smiling beatifically.

"What a lovely dream," he murmured, and fell back on the pillow.

Long hours passed before Scholar finally woke up. He was not surprised at seeing me in the Old Town at all.

"I knew you'd come," he said mysteriously.

"Fancy that! I didn't. Why didn't you tell me? And how come you are here? And Andrew?"

"It was some sort of a mix-up," Scholar explained. "We had brought ammunition for the Old Town, Andrew and myself, and were going back when some idiot started shooting too early on Miodowa Street, and the other boys followed the lead, being naturally jumpy. And, then, well, we just stayed here."

"They tell me you have two ribs busted."

"Oh, what liars they all are! Not busted. Just slightly cracked. A wee bit. And all because of a woman."

"What do you mean, Scholar?"

"Well, there was one woman there. She screamed so you'd think all the houses of the Old Town had crumbled down on her. But it was just a piece of her own house. One wall, as a matter of fact. Rather uncomfortable, I thought, and tried to help her out. And then another bomb fell there, and I was sort of dug in myself. Hence, the two ribs."

"Did they save the woman, too?"

"N-n-n-o . . . Only the upper half. Both her legs were torn off."

Scholar did not say anything about Lucia, and I was afraid to ask him. It was getting late, and the nurses began serving the supper plates in the ward.

"I'll have to go outside now, Scholar," I said. "I'll be back to see you."

After climbing dozens of steps, winding and narrow, I finally came out on the Old Market Place. It was lit up with fires. A voice asked me for directions, which I could

not give, but a woman behind me answered in detail I turned around and saw that she was a nurse.

"It's been like this ever since the first day," she remarked, pointing at the fires "They'll burn everything here, the dogs. There'll be no Old Town any more"

The nurse was from the Old Town, and loved it. She could almost tell by the sound of explosions what the flames were devouring and whose lives were in jeopardy.

We stood there, silent, for a long time, watching those fires. Our helplessness lay like a heavy burden on our shoulders. The beauty built up through centuries of Polish history was burning to ashes before our bloodshot eyes. No one could ever rebuild the Old Town. I remembered the slenderness of the fourteenth-century Cathedral of St. John, and Knights' Street, the narrowest in the Old Town, and the polychrome of the ancient Market Place where the pigeons held their conventions—and I just sat there, on the step of Fukier's wineshop, and cried in helpless rage. Tears have no weight in international politics, I knew. The greatness of our faith and the smallness of our hope made me cry.

Andrew was waiting for me at Scholar's bedside. When he saw me coming, he began to caper among the beds the way small boys do. He threw his arms around my neck and kissed my cheeks, my hands, my hair, laughing and exclaiming: "It's you, it's really you!"

"Behave yourself," I admonished him. "You're in a hospital ward, you know."

But the patients did not mind. No one was asleep yet, and they obviously enjoyed Andrew's exuberance. He gave me his version of events now in quick, chaotic phrases. Then he stopped short in the middle of a sentence.

"Lucia is dead," he said, and all the exuberance was

gone out of him. He said it quietly, in a low voice, his eyes glued to the floor of the cellar.

I could not have expected any other news after Don Quixote's half-words. Yet it hit me hard. It was not like Lucia to die.

"Are you sure, Andrew?"

"Sure. Cadet Cebula told me. He was coming home to say good-bye to his mother. Lucia was going to her unit. On the Three Crosses Square they walked into the path of German fire. Cebula came here wounded. Lucia got a bullet in her head. Instant death. Cebula is dead now, too."

"She was all alone," I said. "She did not leave anyone behind, at least."

"You are wrong," Andrew said wearily. "She did leave someone who loved her very much, whom her death hurt terribly." I was startled to learn that Don Quixote had been in love with Lucia, for I alone knew Lucia's secret, the miserable secret of her flight from love. She had once loved a German. Scholar watched me keenly.

"What is it that you know about Lucia that we don't know?" he pressed. Death had now broken the seal of secrecy on the story of Lucia, dating back to February, 1942, when she and I had carried orders to our forest units in the Holy Cross Mountains, in Central Poland.

It was a cold evening, I recalled, and the journey was long. We thumbed a ride from a German military truck going our way, after promising the fat driver a large sum of money and a bottle of vodka. Vodka was especially coveted by the Germans. We told him we were going to the country for some butter and food. He had to hide us in the huge cases on his truck whenever we approached German patrols on the highway. The driver was apparently very scared over his contraband, but needed money.

"One must live," he said apologetically. He was a Bavarian, and was talkative. Things were not going well in Germany, he told us. The "fares" from his "passengers" permitted him to buy some food in Poland and send it to his family.

About 3.00 A M., the German let us off near the village of Okrzyn. We had about twelve miles to hike to our destination. We gave the driver two hundred zlotys and a bottle of vodka, and his truck rolled on. Lucia knew this part of the country well, having served here as a "forest woman" earlier in the war.

We waited a moment, then wandered off in opposite directions, always mindful of the maxim that God guards him who guards himself. After a lapse of some twenty minutes, in biting February cold, we got off the road, opened our rucksacks and changed our clothes, so that we would look different from the description the driver might possibly give to any German patrol. It was not much of a "camouflage," but still it was worth something. Now we were no longer food smugglers, but "ladies from the city" who went to the country to trade their old clothes for food.

Lucia took out a piece of paper and in the weak glow of a flashlight she checked our route. It was safer to go through the forest, steering away from the beaten track. She walked ahead, and I tried to keep up with her even, easy stride. Much as I tried, I walked like an elephant compared with Lucia's noiseless steps. Every now and then I would step on a dry branch on the ground or bump my head into the festoons of snow hanging low from the burdened trees.

When dawn came, we had covered about half the distance. We sat down to rest in the soft snow.

Something bothered Lucia, I felt, but could not imagine what it was. I knew her as a fearless and cautious soldier of the Underground, steady and not rash.

"I am afraid," Lucia said simply.

"Afraid?" I was stunned. "Afraid of the Germans?"

"No," Lucia replied. "Afraid of one German."

There was a long silence. No silence is as quiet as the silence of a forest under the snow. An ill-defined feeling of fear crept over me, too.

"What is it, Lucia?" I asked, and she responded instantly, in an even, unhurried voice, as if anxious to get rid of her fears through a full confession.

She had been in the Underground ever since 1939. Her parents were dead, and she had no one but a brother, Lutek, a year younger, a member of an infantry regiment that continued fighting the Germans after the campaign in Poland was over, operating from the forests in the Holy Cross Mountains. In 1940, Lucia joined her brother's unit and served as a nurse, cook, soldier and liaison woman.

The forest units had spacious "barracks" dug out deep down under the ferns and tree roots. They had nailed together planks for their beds, stools and tables. They had underground rooms, and a "kitchen" filled with provisions bread, smoked meat, sausage, lard and milk. Many of the boys came from the neighboring villages. They knew the lay of the country intimately. Several times the Germans attempted to smoke out of their holes the "Communists," as they were fond of calling the Polish guerrillas, but they never succeeded.

An old major gave the "forest men" courses in military science. He had no home to go to, for his wife and children had been murdered by the Germans, and this forest dugout had become his home and these boys his family.

Lucia worked hard and was getting her bearings living as a "forest woman." She would walk through the country dressed as a peasant girl, a sickle in her hand, as if going to harvest, or carrying a jug of milk for sale. The old major told her she was invaluable to the detachment.

One night the sentries signaled that a strong German

patrol was approaching. Lutek and the major went out immediately. Later the boys followed, leaving Lucia in the hide-out. She could hear no shots, but there were dull thuds above her head.

She went out. It was dawning. In a thicket near by was Lutek with a few of his men, talking to the doctor of the regiment. The doctor was dressed in a peasant garb, and at first Lucia did not recognize him. On the ground were five men, bound and gagged, German prisoners.

"All right, doctor, we'll take that one home with us," Lutek declared.

They sent the four other Germans away. The fifth one was wounded. He was an officer. He had a bullet in his chest, but was conscious. The doctor put a dressing on his wound, gave him some medicine, and the boys brought him down to their cave.

Lucia was assigned to take care of the young German officer. For several days he lay there in high fever, on the verge of death. Then he began to gain slowly. But the bullet was still in his body and could not be taken out. The German was handsome. He seemed kind. And he seemed upright. His mother was Polish, he told Lucia, and he himself spoke good, pure Polish.

The convalescence dragged on, and Lucia began to realize that she was in love with the German prisoner, and that he was in love with her. They never spoke about it, but they both knew it. The German was often questioned by Lutek and the old major. He never betrayed German military secrets, but he asked Lutek to trust him that he would also never betray the "forest men's" secret. He gave Lutek his word, too, that he would not try to escape. He asked to be allowed to stay as long as possible with the unit.

One night the young German called Lucia over to him. She went to his bedside, afraid of what she might hear, not wanting to hear it, yet longing for it, too.

"Would it change anything in your life, Lucia, if I joined the Home Army?" he asked. Lucia was not startled. She had thought of it as a possibility.

"Nothing can be changed in my life," she answered. "Nothing you could do would change it."

The German was not surprised. He did not raise any other questions, did not plead, or declare his love. It was strange, this exchange between two who were madly in love, yet who would not allow themselves to talk of it.

The next day Lucia left for Warsaw. She ran away. She stayed in Warsaw three months. When she returned, with news and orders for the "forest men," the German was still with the unit. He was no longer a prisoner of war, but worked with the Poles. He was doing an administrative job and was under strict surveillance, but showed no signs of ever wanting to leave. He did everything he was told to do. He even made a bonfire of his German uniform.

"I stayed there two weeks," Lucia ended. "Two dreadful weeks of love that grew stronger in me with each passing day, and for which I hated myself more and more each day. I ran away then. Whether it was brave or cowardly I still don't know. I wrote to Lutek that I could not stay. I never knew whether he understood or not. Now I have volunteered to go on this mission. Perhaps he is not there any more. Lutek did not write and yet he knew I was coming. Perhaps I don't even love him any more. But I am fearful."

In the long silence that followed I wondered what she was afraid of: seeing the German again, or . . . not finding him there.

There was only one more mile ahead of us. I could see how close we were getting to the forest camp by looking at Lucia's face. As we plowed on, she grew pale and her hands trembled violently.

It was full morning when we reached the camp. We were expected, and were warmly received. The German

was nowhere around. Lucia asked no questions. The men said nothing.

It was not until later that some recent recruit who had never seen Lucia before, but heard that she had been with the unit, suddenly burst out: "Say, Miss, you knew that German who killed himself two months back?"

"Yes. I knew him," Lucia said as if this was old news to her. "Where did you bury him?"

"Over there, beyond the clearing. He was as crazy as a loon, that German was. Kept saying that he did not know how to live. That was funny."

Lucia waited patiently until he finished talking. Then she got up quietly, and unobtrusively walked away. I watched her disappear in the forest clearing.

FOR TWO DAYS and two nights we went without sleep, working uninterruptedly in the underground hospital to give the local nurses a chance to recuperate. This was my third and last day in the Old Town. The news was not good. They who strained their ears toward the East heard only the ill-boding silence of the Russian cannon on the other side of the Vistula. New wounded were pouring in. Alarming new casualty figures were being reported. And all the time the weak moans of a fifteen-year-old boy in my ward accompanied me on my tours.

It was the boy who had taken a tank singlehanded on Zjazd Street in the first days of the fighting. He could not speak. He could only moan. By a miracle his eyes had escaped injury while the rest of his face was burned by an incendiary bomb and his body ripped by shell fragments. His lips were black and swollen, and he was all covered with bandages. We had to feed him through a tube. I touched his hand in one tiny spot where there was no dressing. He smiled with his eyes.

Suddenly I felt terribly afraid that I should die without seeing the day of freedom for which I had waited these five horror-filled years. In the fifty-eighth hour of work I broke down.

After a few hours of sleep, I woke up to find that our party from Powisle was preparing to go home. We had done whatever we could to relieve the posts in the Old Town, but we were needed in our own sector, too. Scholar and Andrew were returning with us, to man the machine gun Yanosik had taken in our night attack on the University. Yanosik had persuaded the Old Town command

to give him some ammunition for our precious weapon.

Our rucksacks were lighter on our way back. Coming to the Old Town, we had carried as many medical supplies as each of us could possibly take. Now we only had some grenades, arms, ammunition and chocolate.

I dreaded the return trip through the sewers. Three days were not enough to obliterate the memory of my first journey through them. But there was no other way out of the Old Town. Yanosik gave me an old gas mask, but it did not help much. The trip seemed worse than the first time, and when we finally emerged into the open on Warecka Street, I was seized with violent fits of nausea. By the time we had reached Topiel Street, I had recovered sufficiently so that Barbarka would not mistake me for a scarecrow.

In one of the cellars of our block, there had been about a dozen youths, all strangers, who had refused to join the Home Army, and only reluctantly had lent a hand in the building of our barricades. We knew that they belonged to the *Armia Ludowa*, the People's Army, a Communist organization under orders from Moscow. I now saw them wearing the red-and-white armbands with the letters "A L."—*Armia Ludowa*. Although they still had no arms, it seemed as if they had been instructed to join in the Uprising. There were reports that the People's Army was actually fighting already in other parts of the city. Did it not mean that the Soviet forces would shortly enter Warsaw? We could expect the Russians any day, any hour now, I comforted myself.

In the officers' room at Sweeper's post, Danuta and Sparrow lay on the floor, too exhausted to move, too much in love to part, even for a rest. I sat down on the floor near them.

"Come, Danuta, you ought to rest now," I said. She needed it badly, too. She had gone through the sewers four times already.

Danuta was nineteen. She was from Eastern Poland. I learned her story from bits of confidences, for she was not prone to unburden herself. She lost her family and came to Warsaw in 1940, a fifteen-year-old, alone, in rags and hungry. A woman teacher found her roaming the streets, and befriended her, though she was as poor as a church mouse herself. She worked in the Underground, and Danuta joined the organization, too. A few months after she had found a new "home," her benefactress was arrested by the Germans and taken to the Oswiecim Camp. Danuta was left alone again. She continued to work for the Underground, for the Home Army. She knew what hunger was from her experiences throughout the war years, but was ashamed to ask for food from the people she worked with. They did not have much themselves.

When I met her at our post, as a liaison girl of Command 2/4, Danuta had a much-mended dress on, and a slip, all she possessed. She washed the slip every day as long as there was water. She told me once that she had never eaten as regularly and as well as in our field kitchen. I was appalled, because our food was a far cry from any decent or adequate diet. We served mostly soups, gruel or lean dumplings; we had very little bread, and the eggs the quartermaster would send us occasionally were half-spoiled.

Mrs. Yadviga Wosicka, always looking for people who needed things done for them, unearthed a piece of black material and made a uniform for Danuta out of it. I'll never forget Danuta as she put on her uniform for the first time. She was as radiant as any girl when she puts on her first evening gown.

The world did not exist and did not matter for Danuta when Sparrow was around. I felt sorry for her. She deserved great happiness after the kind of youth she had had. Sparrow was married, and though he was estranged from his wife, he had a little daughter whom he loved

very much. Danuta never got things the easy way, as so many other women did. She always had to fight for them.

Some of the boys came in. Sweeper was with them, and we jointly persuaded Danuta to get some rest in the girls' quarters. She left reluctantly, but was too tired to object. I, too, needed a breathing spell. I returned to the station. Heavily I sat down on the cot. Suddenly I was startled by someone moving near by.

"It's me," I heard a low voice behind me, Danuta's voice.

"What are you doing here?" I scolded mildly. "I thought you had gone to your quarters to rest."

"I must tell you something," she said.

She lay quietly for a moment, without stirring, without speaking. Then she said:

"After the Uprising Sparrow and I are going to get married. He'll get a divorce, Aneri. He does not love his wife, and she is not good for him. She does not love him as I do."

She said it all very quickly. She put her thin arms around me and nestled against me, like a child, the way Barbarka used to do whenever she had something on her mind.

"Do you love him that much, Danuta?"

"More than life," she said. There was no passion in her voice. Danuta lay back, still holding my hand.

"I think I could not live without him," she said. "When I close my eyes, and think, just think, that he is far from me, darkness comes over me, cold, empty darkness. And then . . . I think he is with me again, that he's only mine, and then it's warm and golden. And the world seems kind."

"He has a small daughter, Danuta. Her mother might not let him have her. What then? You know how he loves that child."

"She will give her to us. She will. She does not care for the little one, either."

"How do you know?"

Danuta did not answer.

"We'll have a baby," she dreamed. "A baby boy. He'll grow up to be like Sparrow. And I'll love his daughter as my own. Life will be good. I never knew what a good life is," she sighed "I never knew life could be happy at all. But it can Oh, we will be so happy, so happy..."

Danuta fell asleep.

I went down to the cellar and prepared luxuriously for a long rest. I washed once more, took off my overalls and put on a nightgown. Oh, to sleep in a nightgown! I had not done it for thirteen days, since the beginning of the Uprising. It felt so good to be clean, to stretch on the cot, relax, and go to sleep. "Let the Germans shoot as they please," I thought, falling asleep "Nothing will bother me."

The sound of running feet and excited voices in the street woke me up. I caught the words "Allied planes!" and bounced out of bed. Throwing a black coat over my nightgown, I ran out of the cellar. In the street I stumbled over a huge bundle of material. There was a clink of metal. I bent down to find it was a parachute. Our boys were all running in one direction. I joined them.

Sweeper and his men had already brought down from the roof a "gift from heaven." It was a heavy cigar-shaped case, about twelve feet long, with big buckles at both ends, which opened easily. They carried it amidst joyous clamor and wild excitement to the cellar, that gift from our Allies.

"They say four of them fell in our sector," a voice panted in my ear.

The "cigar" contained three "Piats," British anti-tank guns of the bazooka type. The wrappings were mostly civilian trousers. There were also a few khaki Army coats.

The ammunition came in nine long tubes, tied in three bundles. Cigarettes and containers of powdered tea—a delicious mixture of tea, milk and sugar—filled the remaining space in the “cigar.”

It was reported that another “cigar” fell on Dobra Street, not far from us, and Sweeper dashed over there immediately. Meanwhile we spread out the garments in which the parts of each Piat were wrapped. Instructions, printed both in Polish and in English, were pinned to the clothes telling how to assemble and use the Piat. We tried to spell out the queer foreign words of the language that our Allies spoke. They were to us what old Baloo’s Master Words of the jungle must have been for Mowgli. “We be of one blood, ye and I!”

And then, into this festive atmosphere of Unit Two, Company Four, the adjutant of Captain Krybar, the commander of Group VIII, walked in.

“Who’s in command here?” he asked. His voice was cold and biting.

In the absence of Sweeper who was looking for the other “cigar,” Lieutenant Zoch, his second in command, came forward and reported to Krybar’s adjutant.

“What’s the big idea of opening it up here, Lieutenant? Don’t you know your orders? Don’t you know you can’t do it without the special permission of Captain Krybar? You must give up the arms and ammunition. And you’ll be disciplined, Lieutenant.”

There was a moment of stunned silence. Then a chorus of angry voices burst out:

“But we have no arms here.”

“It fell on our sector.”

“We won’t give it up!”

Krybar’s adjutant was in no mood for negotiating. He was an old-school, regular army officer.

“I’ll teach you,” he snapped. “You call yourselves

soldiers?" There was scorn in his voice. He turned menacingly toward Zoch and repeated, "You'll be disciplined for that, Lieutenant. I'll see to it that you are."

But Zoch was not to be scared. He pounded the table with his two fists and protested angrily against giving up the Piat. The angry voices swelled into a loud chorus. The guards on the barricade joined in the argument over the three guns and the nine long tubes of ammunition, laid among the strewn clothes. Some of the boys clenched their fists and their eyes sparkled with anger.

Arguing all the while that we ought to keep the "cigar" with all its contents, I pushed my way through the crowd toward Krybar's adjutant and Lieutenant Zoch. And it was only then, right in the middle of my heated harangue, that I suddenly remembered the Germans, half a block away from us. At the University I stopped short, in the middle of the sentence, and instead of saying that never, never would we surrender the guns, I said "Please! Suppose the Germans made a sortie right now. They'd make sauerkraut out of us!"

Krybar's adjutant looked at me queerly. It was only later that I realized that it must have been annoying to him to see a woman civilian in her nightgown, with a black coat thrown over her shoulders, sticking her nose in a military matter. But at the time I was not conscious of my attire.

Lieutenant Zoch cooled down. Orders were orders, after all, and most unfortunately, and—technically speaking—Krybar's adjutant was right. We had to give up our find. But we did receive one Piat and one-third of the ammunition, and a few pairs of trousers.

After Krybar's adjutant had left, I looked at an envelope I was holding tight in my left hand. I had thought it was another set of instructions, and was going to read them carefully now.

The envelope was bulky, bulkier than the instructions. I opened it unthinkingly, and saw small sheets of paper, covered with scrawling handwriting I looked closely It was in Polish

"Do Walczacych Braci w Warszawie!" I read. "To our fighting brothers in Warsaw!"

Then I felt my throat tighten. The plane that had dropped the supplies must have been flown by Polish airmen, by our brothers, fighting abroad, alongside our Allies I held the crumpled sheets reverently and drank in the words of the letter:

"This is the first time they let us fly to Warsaw to bring you help It's a long way from Italy to your barricades. Yet it is but one stretch of the long road we have to take to go back to you, to Poland, and to freedom. We have fought on all the battlefronts of this war, wherever our blood was needed. We have fought for Poland, and not only for Poland. For men's freedom throughout the world. Through many battles I followed the roads that led us back with but one thought: the thought of Poland. I could not shorten the long trails of war Yet it was nearer with each battle. Each German plane shot down brought us closer to home.

"Today—my city is burning, and you are fighting on Warsaw's barricades It's so far. We could not come earlier They did not let us fly to you We have to fight for our right to bring you whatever help we can. We fight for our turns to be assigned to this mission. If we only could, we would all come to you.

"Believe us that we are one with you, one in heart, and one in mind. I cannot possibly describe the hell we go through here, thinking of your fight there, your lonely, magnificent, unaided struggle. We believe that your supreme effort will never be forgotten. God knows we will never forget it

"My home was on Browarna Street. Perhaps my mother and my sisters are still there. I don't know. I do not plead for them

"I am a child of Warsaw. The same blood, your blood, flows through my veins, and the rhythm of our hearts is the same I wake up at night and see your barricades, as if I had built them with you, with my own hands.

"May God help you and strengthen you, brothers."

There was no name at the end of the letter Only this signature. "A sergeant of the Polish Air Force " His home was on Browarna Street, one block from my station, across from the German machine guns at the University His mother and sisters lived on Browarna Street, where fifteen bodies had been lying for thirteen days now, ever since the first day of the Uprising, decaying in the August sun.

For a couple of days it was quiet in Powisle The civil authorities ordered the shops opened. A small café on Tamka Street timidly ventured to resume business Within forty-eight hours it ran out of supplies. Grocery stores had neither groceries nor vegetables, except some split peas and grits, which they distributed free while they lasted. Shoemakers displayed signs that they would repair soldiers' boots without charge Tailor shops offered to make uniforms and alterations free for members of the Home Army.

A lad whom I had never seen before walked into our Red Cross station and offered me a case stuffed with shavings and paper.

"What is it, soldier?" I asked in surprise.

"To tell the truth, sister, I'm not sure myself," he answered, scooping out the wrappings. The case was full of small capsules for injections, morphine, anti-tetanus serum and strychnine What a treasure!

"Where did you get it all?" I gasped

"We were searching a former German apartment and found it there."

Another surprise came when a tailor in our street appeared with sixty yards of cloth for overcoats, and all he wanted in return was an official receipt for it. He knew of another couple of hundred yards stored in Smolna Street. "And what kind of material is it?" I inquired. The tailor waxed enthusiastic. "Beautiful wool, madame. One hardly sees the like of it these days"

And then there was the unexpected visit of Mr. Laskowiak. He lived in the neighborhood, had a small daughter, and had worked in some German office. When Warsaw was evacuated by the German administration in the latter part of July, Laskowiak was left without resources, except for some hundred and fifty yards of heavy canvas belting.

"I have no food to give the child," he reported to me, and asked whether he could exchange the belting for victuals. Laskowiak, whose wife had died some months before, never confided his troubles to his neighbors. I prepared a package of food.

"This is for your little one," I said, handing it to him. He shifted uneasily on his feet and swallowed hard. "I should have given you all the belting free, but you understand, madame, don't you? It's different when a child is hungry. She's so tiny, you know. You've got to feed her, at least once in a while."

I reassured him. Mr. Laskowiak plucked up enough courage to tell me that there were some thousands of rolls of such belting in a warehouse in Bracka Street and that he had the keys to it. A glance at the material showed that we could make stretchers, of which we had so pitifully few, out of it.

In our field kitchen the stocks were getting so low that I had to take up the matter with the boys. "We have nothing for tomorrow's dinner," I announced.

"Why don't you cook something with vegetables and things?" Yanosik volunteered.

"Gladly," I answered coldly, "if you provide the vegetables."

"Remember the tomatoes I was telling you about after our attack on the University?" Yanosik observed "We can go there tonight and pick plenty of vegetables for dinner tomorrow." He dismissed lightly such trifles as the fact that the vegetable patches were close to the German positions and that a few hand grenades and sharpshooters might exact a rather high price for the produce.

"All right," I declared. "Why don't we go there tonight?"

With Sweeper's consent, Yanosik took charge of our expedition. Golecz, Nalecz and two other boys, carrying big sacks for the green booty, joined us.

The night was dark, but the moon would rise later. Yanosik led with sure, catlike steps. He knew the ground well. Every now and then he would make us stay behind while he went ahead to reconnoiter. We walked in single file, making haste. As we were about to jump over the barbed-wire fence of the garden, a low voice hissed: "Password!"

Before we had time to answer, a shot was fired. The sentry who had challenged us was obviously jittery. We fell to the ground, cursing. One of us called out the password. But our expedition began to lose its romantic aspect, as it seemed to us that the German posts had been put on guard.

We reached the vegetable patch and got safely past our last sentry. The moon was climbing up. There was an open space, without even a tiny bush for protection, before us. The boys readied their guns while we crawled. We began gathering whatever was handy, mostly beets. I was rapidly filling my long and wide apron, which formed a huge bundle in front of me when I tied its

corners. I had to squat and jump like a frog. We crawled on until we reached bean stalks where one could almost stand up straight.

"There are breath-taking tomatoes farther on," Yanosik whispered. "Mind you, though, don't pick the green ones "

With both hands I was cramming beans into my loaded apron when I thought I heard a suspicious sound I turned toward Yanosik only to find that he was off in the tomato patch. And then I heard the same sound again I stood still, and it seemed to me that I heard it a third time. Yanosik came over, took me by the hand and pulled me down.

"Duck," he whispered, taking out his revolver. We lay in silence, straining our eyes and ears. Suddenly Yanosik burst out laughing. He was pointing at a small white object moving at some distance, waddling and making quaint noises.

"Is that a goose, Yanosik, or am I seeing things?" I, too, laughed.

"There is nothing I'd rather eat with my tomatoes than a goose," Yanosik ruminated aloud. We knew that the Germans at the University raised fowl. "Do you know how one calls a goose?" Yanosik asked me I shrugged my shoulders "Goosey, goosey, goosey, come here," he whispered caressingly. The goose would not respond

"There must be a way of calling them," he sighed "I just don't know the right words You should have lived on a farm, Aneri, and not studied your silly law and medicine," he reproached me. And he began to crawl toward the goose. But Nalecz got there first. He wrung the bird's neck, and threw it at us. A dead goose fell at our feet.

A bullet from the University whistled above our heads We waited apprehensively, but there were no more shots.

"A goose for your kitchen, Aneri," said Nalecz on the way back, offering me the prize "It's skin and bones,

though. You won't get much out of it. You ought to complain to the German management."

Our Red Cross station looked like a vegetable store upon our return. Sweeper and the other boys particularly admired one part of our loot, a big sack of potatoes which bore a German military stamp. Clearly, some German had gone out for supplies and left the bag temporarily in the garden, never anticipating that it would vanish in his "own backyard" by the time he returned to collect it.

"His face, can you imagine the expression on his face when he comes to pick it up," I could hardly speak between convulsions of laughter. The boys aired some hilarious though unprintable remarks. Yanosik stood there modestly, taking his bows for organizing the expedition. He winked at me.

"The tomatoes, they just melt in your mouth," he chuckled, smacking his lips. "And they are only beginning to ripen."

HAD GOD forgotten us? The fifteenth day of the Uprising had drawn to its end, and the hope for our rescue was growing dimmer and dimmer. Our High Command had issued orders to the "Forest Units" in the vicinity of Warsaw to come to the relief of the pressed Home Army within the capital. A large detachment, joined by a contingent of five hundred boy scouts, approached the city from the modern workers' suburb of Kolo. On August 15, the Germans intercepted the fresh reserves in the Wola district and annihilated them after a desperate fight. The boy scouts were of Belina's unit, and I had met many of the youngsters while they were undergoing field training in the Garvolin Forest. I could still see those young, almost childlike faces. And now I was crushed to learn that none of them had escaped alive.

The district of Wola had been the first in Warsaw to fall to the enemy. Its streets were gutted with fire. Report had it that its entire population had been exterminated. Would we, too, have to go on and on until we suffered a like fate?

"Come, dear, there is no point in eating your heart out," Zofia's kind arms closed around me. "We will have more losses in the days to come. We must face them."

I got up and dragged my heavy feet to the Red Cross station. Barbarka looked up at me from over the huge pile of socks she was mending.

"Mummy," she said. "I don't think there is any use in darning these. I'll work on them for hours and then the boys will stick their toes right through them!"

I shrugged my shoulders helplessly. I turned on the faucet to wash my face. There was no water. I swore.

"There is some water down in the cellar, still," Zofia said gently. "And they started digging a well in the courtyard at 18 Topiel Street, too."

"I'll go to the post and see if they need anything there," I said. "Golecz has quite a high temperature today."

The boys at the post were depressed by the news, too. One group was leaving on patrol duty. Danuta and Sparrow were going along. Danuta's eyes were red-rimmed. Had she been crying again? I wondered.

We walked back together to the station, where I served them one round of bitter-sweet liqueur. We talked about the small chapels which people erected in the cellars to pray for God's pity and for Victory; and about the fifteen bodies on Browarna Street that had been lying there for the past two weeks without burial; and about the general situation that was rapidly growing critical. Then there was a moment of silence. Sparrow took out his wallet, pulled out of it a small picture, and looked at it for a long while.

"Did I ever show you my girl?" he asked at last, timidly. The question surprised me.

"No, Sparrow. Let me see her."

A little lady with plump cheeks and stiff pigtailed smiled from the picture. She had a snub nose and gay eyes. She held on to a small shaggy dog with both hands.

"Last night I dreamed she came to me," Sparrow said. "I felt her tiny arms around my neck, and she kissed me on the mouth."

He looked at the photograph before putting it back in the wallet. Then his voice hardened again and his eyes were their usual hue of steel.

"We've got to go now," he said, and pressed my hand firmly. Sparrow saluted me as he left. I remembered later this surprise, the second in that short half hour.

They left the station. I sat down to write the usual reports to Colonel Matylda, but was unable to do it. They

were all the same, all dripping with too much human blood.

Scholar came in. He was still in pain, for his ribs had not yet mended. He pointed to his throat, pleading for a drink. We then went outside and sat on the flagstones which were piled against our barricade. The fires from burning Gesta Street, some four short blocks away, lit up the corpses sprawling on Browarna Street. There were so many dead all over the city that the Sanitary Service did not have enough gatherers to bury them all. Entire stories of houses collapsed, burying hundreds, thousands in their cellars. Many of these people could have been saved if we had had the equipment with which to dig our way through mountains of bricks to them. As it was, all we could do was to try not to go raving mad thinking of those buried alive in the subterranean shelters of their homes.

"It is true that you tried out Nalecz's anti-tank brain child today?" Scholar asked.

"We did," I answered.

Our new anti-tank weapon was christened the Nalecz Catapult. In reality this much-advertised weapon was not much more than a sling. It looked like a pitchfork, without the middle teeth, and was firmly grounded into a heavy three-legged iron base, about four feet high. The two ends of the pitchfork were joined by two tight springs, with a leather cup in between. The catapult required a crew of two. One man would pull back the springs, in preparation for the "shot"; another would place a small bottle of explosives in the leather cup, and light the fuse.

We placed our new weapon on the second floor balcony of the house on the corner where Sweeper's post was located, and directed our "fire" into Obozna Street. The range of the catapult was between seventy or eighty yards.

"We ought to send this 'secret weapon' to our Allies," Scholar commented bitterly. "It might hasten their coming to our rescue."

"Look here, Scholar," I said sternly. "Why don't you go to the hospital for a couple of days? They'd patch you up immediately."

"Nonsense!" he answered, as he had done many times before. "I'll get well here, too."

"But you might at least make yourself comfortable in the cellar."

"There'll be enough time to stay under ground in my grave."

We sat there in silence, a little irritated for bringing up that subject again. Our nerves were on edge.

From the direction of Tamka Street came the sound of hurried steps. There was an urgency in them which made me rise instantly. I saw Danuta coming. She was running toward us, her mouth wide open, panting for breath, her face black with smudges of gunfire and streaked red with blood.

"Danuta!" I called. She turned upon me a pair of frantic eyes that froze the speech on my lips.

"Sweeper," she screamed, and her voice, too, was beyond control. "Where is Sweeper? Quick! It's Sparrow! Oh, hurry!"

Her voice broke down. We ran to the post.

"Sweeper!" she called wildly. "Sparrow's wounded! Badly wounded! The Germans have set fire to the house we were in."

Sweeper dashed out with a few of our boys. Danuta and I followed. She quieted down a little, now that help was coming. But she was still trembling violently, and her teeth chattered as if in a fever.

"What happened there?" Sweeper asked.

"We were in the courtyard of that house on Browarna

Street, Number 14 Everything seemed quiet. The Germans at the University did not show up. Then, hand grenades were dropped into the yard. Someone yelled A woman fell, shrieking. We saw some men running through Browarna down toward the University. We began shooting. Sparrow killed one. Stach killed two. Sparrow left the gateway we were standing in and ran to the screaming woman I followed him. Everything was on fire. People were running with buckets of water. Then, as we reached the woman, another grenade came down right near us. Sparrow groaned. He staggered He pressed his hands to his side, and fell. He told me to go to you with the report, and ask for help."

Danuta led the way. She made us run.

"He did not bleed much," she kept saying. "It is dangerous, Aneri? He got it in his side. What do you think?"

A priest was standing on the steps of the house. I recognized it as that of a monastery and a vocational school conducted by the Fathers. Many of our boys had taken courses in carpentry there. The priest led us upstairs

There, on a table, lay Sparrow. They had covered him with a sheet. His shirt, stained with small spots of blood, his grenades, his revolver and his coat were laid out at his side.

I raised the sheet. Sparrow's body was still warm, and death had not yet sharpened his features. There was a tiny red spot on the right side of his bare chest. His eyes were closed. The priest had probably closed them. I bent over to kiss the forehead before I pulled the sheet over him again.

Danuta was sitting quietly on the floor, Sparrow's gun in her hands. I took the gun away from her. She did not protest. She got up and asked me to go with her. Sweeper nodded He understood.

I took Danuta to the cellar of our house She let me

undress her and put her to bed. Obediently she drank a glass of tea I gave her. I washed her face, and it was only then that I noticed that she had been wounded. Her cheek was torn and bruised and in her right hand was a bullet hole.

"The importance of death," she kept mumbling. "Do you think death is important, Aneri?"

I gave her two sleeping tablets with her tea.

"It is so hard, I can't understand it," she complained.

"What is it, dear, that you can't understand?"

"Death."

I remembered how she held Sparrow's gun in her hand up there in the monastery.

"Danuta," I said sharply. I was too worn myself to be diplomatic about it. "You won't do anything foolish, will you? Nothing rash, I mean. I know it's dreadful what's happened to you. We all feel the same way. Well, promise me you won't do anything... You know what I mean."

The girl turned her head and stared at me for a long, long minute.

"We need you," I said. "We can't possibly afford to lose you."

With dry eyes she looked at me still longer, unflinchingly.

"Don't worry," Danuta spoke out. "Do you think I have to kill myself to die?"

I sat there a little longer till the tablets began to take effect and Danuta fell asleep. Then I decided to go and look for some planks to make a coffin for Sparrow. Through the cellars I went to Browarna Street to ask the Fathers if they could spare a few boards.

In the cellar of the house where Sweeper had his post, I came upon the dozen young knights of the People's Army. They were playing cards in the flickering light of a candle. So, after all, Moscow had not yet ordered its

votaries to take up arms, as we had been led to believe by earlier reports

In the cellar of No. 29, I heard in the darkness a woman's voice, shrill and hysterical, hiss in angry reproach:

"So they wanted to play heroes! To make an uprising! Let them die then! Let them pay for it!"

This hit me so hard I had to stop. I lighted my flashlight to see the ugly, contorted face that had uttered these cruel words. I recognized her, which made the hate easier to bear. One of her two daughters had gone off to the Reich with a German officer, to come back later, ashamed and tearful, for he would not marry her after all. The younger girl, fifteen years old, had turned her home into a German brothel. The mother was no better. Yet her cry hurt me. One could not demand that the entire million inhabitants of Warsaw should all turn into heroes. Men are a race of bread-eaters, after all, and not of angels, I reflected.

I went upstairs, to my apartment, where Barbarka slept peacefully, close to our Persian cat, Kaytek, which nestled on her bed. I stood over her and watched her slumber. My thoughts carried me back to my grandfather, who had fought for our liberation in the great revolt of 1863, and spent eleven long years of deportation and exile in Siberia; to my mother, when she held my hand tight in 1918, as she was knocking at the door of the German colonel who had ordered the execution of my father; to my brother, as I had seen him last, kicked, swollen, scarred and bloody, after his escape from the clutches of the Gestapo.

"Not Barbarka," I prayed in a whisper. "Please, God, let her live, the way people do in other countries."

We buried Sparrow quietly the next day, in the very court where he had lost his life while trying to save the

wounded woman The earth we turned up for his grave was humid and yellowish We put a cross, a sign, and his red-and-white armband on his grave We left him there, where he had died, signing with his own blood Poland's covenant with freedom.

In the afternoon I undertook a mission to the store of the Kupalski brothers in quest of some wine for our station. Golecz was still very sick and a glass of good red wine would help him. On our way back we planned to call on some of the boys from our post in the hospital and cheer them up

To impress the Kupalski brothers, I put on a clean white nurse's apron and told Andrew and Nalecz, who were going with me, to shine their shoes and brush their uniforms We got our passes from Lieutenant Pobog and stopped off at the garden of the Charity Sisters to rob the good nuns of a magnificent bouquet for the wounded boys.

On Copernicus Street, people began to throw knowing glances at us, shouting congratulations and making wisecracks. Could they not put two and two together? One did not see a nurse in spotless uniform, carrying a large bouquet, and accompanied by two men with shiny boots, without drawing conclusions.

"Before or after?" "So she got you after all, soldier, eh?" Jolly voices shouted after us

There was an epidemic of weddings. Everywhere one saw young couples either going to or coming from their wedding ceremonies. The stiff old-time marriage rules and formalities were no longer observed. A priest giving his blessing to a new couple right in the street was a common sight. As there was no way of producing documents to prove one's statements and no time to publish the banns, all the priests required from the couples was an oath before God Almighty that they were free to

marry The ceremony would then be held in a still surviving church, if possible, or anywhere.

Nalecz, Andrew and I did not bother to deny the rumors which sprouted around us. Quickly we decided that Nalecz was to be the happy groom and Andrew the best man. Thus we merrily marched to Warecka Street, and there, unexpectedly, someone yelled.

"Hold it!"

"Hold what?" I asked

"The pose"

So we did. They were making a documentary film of the destruction to send abroad, and the cameramen thought newlyweds would add a bit of local color to the Warsaw Uprising. Before we had time to protest several shots of us were taken in which I figure in a bridal role.

The Kupalski establishment was located on Chmielna Street, a couple of blocks away from the bloody barricade on Sikorski Avenue. It was a busy place, crowded with soldiers of the Home Army who were hauling away supplies. I asked to see one of the Kupalski brothers. A young man came over, bowed, and introduced himself. I told him how I had met his brother, who promised to help us out in need.

"You see, Mr. Kupalski, we do need some red wine now for our Red Cross station."

"That must have been Cousin Johnny," he said. "Inebriated again." The solemn word amused me. "Is this a wedding?" he continued, pointing at my bouquet of roses and at the festive-looking Nalecz and Andrew.

"Why, yes," I said. "But the wine is not to celebrate the occasion. It's for the Home Army and for the Red Cross station on Topiel Street."

I am not sure Mr. Kupalski believed me. But he did give us ten bottles of good French red wine, and promised to send some more to the station. The next morning a case of forty bottles arrived. A note attached inside read.

"With best wishes for a happy wedded life and for Victory
—from the Brothers"

Our boys at the hospital greeted us with shouts of glee. They had exciting reports about a skirmish involving the capture of a German car right near the hospital, which the patients had been able to watch from the windows

The darling of the ward was an old woman well over seventy, neat and cheerful, who was always ready to do things for people. There was one thing "Grandma" could not stand—griping. Every night she put up her white hair in paper curlers, and while doing so scolded the culprits who had been griping during the day. She would gesticulate with one hand—the other was in a splint—and hold forth.

"The idea! This is my fifth war, and I know what I'm talking about. You have a roof over your head and something to put into your mouth, so what are you griping about? You might as well get used to the German planes. It stands to reason you have to, and that's what I did. And the Germans won't kill everybody off. Because that's impossible. Someone always remains. That's the way the world is made, my dear. There is no use complaining about your fate. It's not so hard to start all over again. I ought to know. I've started from scratch four times in my life... Take it from one who knows. griping does not pay"

I listened avidly. It was the kind of philosophy I needed badly just then. That evening we were to go to the Old Town, through the sewers again, to help evacuate the wounded from that sector. I shuddered at the very thought of the enterprise. Why, it was dreadful enough to go with but a rucksack on one's back, but how would we ever carry wounded through the hell of the sewers?

In theory, the journey should have been more bearable

this time, since there was no water to speak of in the city works. (The people used latrines dug out in the courtyards.) But in practice, I never knew why, it was just the contrary. The stench and slime were even worse than on my first trip.

After nerve-racking and body-breaking hours of crawling, we finally got to the Old Town, and were directed immediately to a large hospital in the basement of an old church which was now totally destroyed. It was the Church of the Jesuit Fathers, and many of them were in the wards helping the nurses and bringing a word of cheer and faith to the wounded and the dying.

Someone took the dressings and the medical supplies we had brought with us. A hand poured a glassful of water down my throat. After washing and a short rest, we would have to go back again. We were to take with us only the lighter cases, only those who had a chance of making the trip through the sewers.

The patient entrusted to my care was a small boy, Yanek. He had lost one eye, and could not see as yet out of the other. Right then he had both his eyes bandaged and trudged behind me, holding my hand. Yanek was ten. He had lost his parents somewhere in the fighting chaos of the Old Town, and was left all alone. He was calm, and even cheerful in a quiet sort of way, believing firmly that eventually he would be able to see again.

The return journey was almost unendurable. I stumbled ever so often. I had to stop several times to wait for Yanek, who would get lost. The blind boy, crawling behind me, did not even have the slight advantage we had of seeing a little now and then in the abysmal depths.

I had no flashlight with me and the matches I tried to strike went out immediately. Yanosik, carrying on his back a man with wounded legs, the way one might carry a bag of potatoes, noticed my vain efforts

"Aneri, you're a medic, aren't you?" he said, at last.

"Well, almost. What is it now?"

"Just wondering about oxygen. You know anything about it?"

"Why?"

"Well, matches won't light here, I see. Is that the oxygen that people sort of ..hm... sort of exhale?"

"Shut up," I said. "I'm in no mood for clowning."

Yanek asked me in a plaintive voice whether there would be any water to drink farther on. I had a bit of water in my canteen and handed it to him. I felt the small, dirty hands clasp the canteen avidly and heard him gulp the water down.

"Are you that thirsty, Yanek?" I asked. "You do not feel that your throat is sore, do you?"

"No, madame," the small voice answered behind me. "I'm just thirsty. It's so awful here, madame."

"It won't be very long now," I said. I did not even know whether I was telling the boy a lie or not. But it had been so long already....

It reassured me a little bit that Yanek's throat did not feel sore. There were many cases of a strange throat ailment afflicting those who had gone through the sewers. The doctors did not know what the illness was. The throat would be slightly irritated and the patients complained of "needles in the throat," whatever that was. Nothing helped. After a few days, if the person afflicted was otherwise sound of body, the infection passed without visible trace. The wounded and the sick did not get off as easily as that, though. An inflammation would follow and I had myself seen two fatal cases of "sewers' throat."

We went on and on, interminably, in deadly silence, and in growing weariness. At last I saw the crescent of light where the manhole was. Then I stumbled again. And there was darkness and quiet all around me.

I woke up in a half-demolished house, not far from

the entrance to the sewers, on Warecka Street. A nurse was bending over me, and someone else was sticking a needle in my arm

"What's happened?" I asked.

"You fell down the ladder coming out of the sewers," the nurse informed me

"And Yanek? The blind boy?"

"He's all right," the doctor said "But no more sewers for you, lady. This was the last time for you, unless you don't want to ever get out of them again"

Strange is the feeling of humiliation and helpless anger over the fact that you cannot yourself do what others can. I felt it then so bitterly that I had difficulty in swallowing my tears when I heard the doctor's verdict. I felt as if I had failed my comrades.

I was being led back to our post. I stopped at the manhole where a young cadet was on guard.

"And the others?" I asked. "Yanosik and Aniela and Nalecz, and the other girls? Where are they?"

"They went back to the Old Town for more wounded," he replied.

I looked down the dark hole and at the ladder of iron rods, and shuddered to think of them going through the torture of the sewers again. I was nauseated once more

"One of them left a note for you," the cadet said, and handed me a sloppy scrap of paper bearing Andrew's schoolboyish, round writing:

"Captain Scholar orders Lieutenant Aneri back to the post Lieutenant Aneri is to take things easy for three days following this order."

I burst out laughing.

CHAPTER 9 FROM THE CAVES OF DESPAIR

I WAS DOZING PEACEFULLY at the Red Cross station, convalescing from the ill effects of my trip through the sewers, when a cheerful voice woke me up with a start: "I'm back, madame. I told you I'd be back."

I rubbed my heavy eyes and stared at him standing there in the doorway. It was that strange young man from Mokotow with his withered arm "What d'you know!" I finally ejaculated.

Just as unexpectedly, he had first appeared at the station a few days earlier. Carrying a heavy bag on his back, he had dropped it on the floor, had wiped his face and had proudly announced: "I come from the Mokotow Prison."

We had been incredulous, for Mokotow was almost at the other end of Warsaw and severe fighting was going on there. The strange visitor had shown himself eager to tell his story: "About a month ago the Krauts threw me in jail—for," he hesitated as he rolled a cigarette deftly, "well, you know, for a little deal in money changing."

I had nodded understandingly. One had to live, hadn't one? I had offered the stranger a chair and a drink, as he went on:

"There is a high wall around the jail, you know, but a resourceful man like me was not going to be intimidated by such trifles. So I had my friends smuggle in to me a good knife and a respectable crowbar. There were three of us in on it, the plan to make a break. And then, one fine morning, it was August 1st, Tuesday, the SS-birds took over. We knew that meant serious business. We

had gotten along all right with the German jailer. He liked shekels and vodka.

"Our cell faced the court and there were about seventy of us there—some for smuggling, some for black-market trading, but mostly innocent men, like myself. There was one chap who had been in for two years, and hadn't been questioned even once.

"We watched and waited. Not long either. They brought us dinner. A dish of water with three grains and half a carrot in it, and a piece of bread. The bread was even better than the one you get on the ration card. It was army bread.

"I looked out, and saw some eighty Krauts in the courtyard lapping up vodka. Each had a bottle of it. They drank for about half an hour. Then they got up, adjusted their uniforms, and picked up their guns.

"About a hundred men were led out of our building, and were immediately surrounded. The prisoners held their hands behind their backs. Then the Krauts began to shoot them in the back of the head, one after the other. Holy Virgin! That was a sight to make your bowels turn upside down. You could hear a pin drop in our cell. No one spoke till they killed them all and brought the next batch. They killed them, too, and brought the third. Then we realized that they were taking them cell by cell, and that our turn would come, too, and soon.

"'Antek,' I said to my pal, 'we're deader'n a herring.'

"When they had butchered some three hundred people down there, some bird in our cell started screaming. He went mad. He began to jump at our throats and bite us. We dumped him in the corner and he quieted down. We paid no more attention to him for a while. Then we noticed that he had hanged himself. He had torn his pants in strips and strung a noose from them.

"I was not going to let them butcher me like that. So we fell talking with the bigwig in our cell, who was sort

of professional, you know, about disposing of people. He took the crowbar, I took the knife, and we stood at the door waiting for them to come. The bigwig on the left, I—on the right.

"We heard their steps nearing our door. The key turned in the lock and three of them stood in the doorway, shouting: '*Raus!*'"

"Then it was quick work. The bigwig slugged the first of them, I jumped on the other and knifed him. They shot the bigwig though I saw the blood gush out of his belly. The third German threw a grenade inside the cell, but it did not go off. We finished him in a jiffy. One of the boys picked up the grenade and threw it out immediately. Everything went off so quickly no one even heard the shots in the general hubbub. The three Krauts were dead. We had one rifle, three revolvers and two grenades. We broke out of our cell. Running, we tossed one of the grenades down the staircase. We opened one cell after the other and let the men out. While we were working on the door of the fourth cell, the Germans began to shoot at us. Then one of the boys set fire to a stool and threw it down on the Germans. After this, we gave them one more grenade, our last one. The fire had spread throughout the building by the time we got to the last cell. We were already downstairs when we heard new shots and explosions from the courtyard. There was no going back for us. The upper floor was all on fire, and it was getting hot downstairs, too. We huddled in the hall, near the door. Then we discovered that there were men outside who were tossing grenades into the court. A regular battle was going on there, but we did not know who was gaining the upper hand. And then a machine gun began barking from the broken-down gate, and the SS-men started yelling and raising their hands. We realized that it was the Underground troops who had come to rescue us.

"I never belonged to any party or organization in my life, but when I saw them storming that courtyard... well, I cried like a little kid. They wore red-and-white armbands, and I swore there and then I would join up with whatever those fellows were doing. They were a good lot. I've never been in the service because of that bum left arm I got, but I'm quick on the trigger and mighty handy all the same.

"They told us of the Uprising, that the Soviets were coming, and that we won't see Krauts in Warsaw any more. My three-year-old doesn't bawl when he gets a spanking the way all of us prisoners bawled then.

"Some of us joined up immediately. I told them I'd get back, but I had to go to Praga and see my wife and my kid first. So that's where I'm going now. It took me seven days to get here from Mokotow."

The story, we knew, was true. We had already heard about the slaughter of the prisoners in the Mokotow Prison on the very day of the Uprising. It was quite a feat to get from Mokotow to Powisle. But to Praga? That seemed impossible. And we had pointed out to him that there was no more fighting on the right bank of the river, as the entire suburb of Praga had again fallen into German hands.

"I tell you I am going to see my wife before I go back to join the Home Army in Mokotow."

"But how?"

"Swim. They won't see me by night. You just be a good girl and show me the safest way to the river from here."

Sweeper had offered to take him to the river in the evening. That same night, after some hours of sleep, the young man with the withered left arm had plunged into the Vistula and had vanished. We had never expected him to turn up again.

"So you did come back," I now remarked, as he stood in the doorway. "How is your wife, and your boy?"

"They're all right Just wanted to tell you I am on my way back to Mokotow—so you wouldn't think I'm a stinker "

"Goodness, no!" I said truthfully "I think you are wonderful."

The young man made a wry face.

"Mokotow won't hold out much longer, though," I warned him. "They are in desperate straits there."

"I'll get there in time," he answered simply. "Good-bye, madame."

Large fires broke out in our sector, and while we were fighting the flames the Germans attacked It was a miracle that our post did not fall that night They had us flanked from Browarna Street and from Obozna Street They brought into action their machine guns and their mortars and—as Yanosik put it later—"they were filthy with ammunition." We had our two machine guns, but we were in no position to squander ammunition. Our machine guns would begin to sing when the German fire quieted down We figured out that they would stop firing, thinking we had had enough, so we used whatever ammunition we had to let them know that that was not the case The fighting went on at close range for several hours Then the Germans withdrew back to the University from which they had made their sortie.

It was getting hard for us to keep wide awake Our boys, all of them, had been on duty for thirty-one hours without respite In the morning the German planes flew overhead, strafing our positions. And then they circled over the University grounds.

"Hey, look at that!" someone yelled, and, suddenly, we were all on edge

The German planes swooped down and dumped some bags and bundles for their garrison at the University. We watched tensely with but one thought food and arms.

"Wouldn't it be grand," Yanosik dreamed aloud, "if these eight planes were ours. You know, just pretending to bring help, but here to drop a dozen or so bombs . . ."

"Always shooting your mouth off, Yanosik," Nalecz scolded angrily. "You know damn well we haven't a blessed plane to our name."

We watched the planes circle, practically over our post, and our mouths watered with envy. And then the incredible, the prayed-for thing happened. One of the planes had dropped its load a split second too late. A gust of wind carried the bundles on to the "no man's land" of Skarpa, between the University and our post.

There was a rush from the Red Cross station. We simply had to have those packages. We never stopped to think that the Germans, too, might dash out of their University posts. Although there was some shooting, our boys secured the booty. We carried the heavy bags to the station, and a tight circle of people huddled around them.

Yanosik untied the strings of the largest bag, which was dripping with fat. We caught our breath sharply. Before us was the generous half of a huge hog.

We approached the other two pick-ups reverently after the first inspiring experience. They contained two wooden boxes. We raised the lids, and Yanosik shouted triumphantly: "Ammunition for machine guns! Hurray for the Krauts!"

Hugging the stately Zofia, he dragged her off for a dance of joy, crying: "A gift from heaven for your Uncle Yanosik. I told you I'd keep you provided with fodder for the machine gun, didn't I?"

With a triangle and a tape, Sweeper was already measuring the half-hog, trying to figure out how to divide it fairly between our post and Command 2/4.

The station quieted down. Everybody, except for the boys on the barricade, went to sleep. The glow of the burnt-out houses was dying down. From time to time

tongues of fire shot up toward the dark sky, where the German searchlights were hunting for Allied planes that might bring us help. But none came.

In the office of our station, I sat on my cot, the typewriter on my knees, trying to compose my current report to Colonel Matylda. There was quite a lot to write about.

The sheets of paper, strewn on the cot, rustled quietly as if a new current of air had entered the room. I looked up. The door was opening slowly, cautiously, without a noise. I took my revolver from under the pillow, holding it firmly, and watched the door open more and more, till a bundle of something or other was pushed in. I squinted, and looked hard. A pair of hands sneaked into the crack after the bundle, and I recognized them immediately, the inimitable hands of Yanosik. Quickly I hid the gun under the pillow, but the sight of Yanosik coming in with a pre-occupied frown on his forehead and tightly pursed lips, closing the door stealthily, did not clear things up.

"Why so quiet?" I asked ironically. "Are the cops after you?"

I looked closer at him. He was dirty and looked very tired. No one could be angry at Yanosik for longer than a minute.

"Here is some wine, if you don't feel well, Yanosik," I said.

The boy poured himself a glass and sat down, stretching his legs. He sipped his wine appreciatively, then he observed, half to me, half to himself. "I wonder if they, too, gave him any wine when he got back?"

"Who got back where? What are you talking about, Yanosik?"

Yanosik did not deign to answer for quite a while. I knew he had something up his sleeve. Finally my curiosity gave way, and I burst out: "Come on, Yanosik.

Where have you been, and what have you been doing with yourself, and what have you brought with you?"

"Any cigarettes? Will you give me some?"

"Don't pull the strings too tight, or they'll break," I advised him, as I handed him a package of *Kluby*.

Yanosik liked talking and he told his stories with a healthy gusto no other man on the post could equal.

"My evening stroll took me to the small houses on Browarna Street, the ones, you know, that served for the German fireworks yesterday," he began "I was rather bored with life in general and I was not sleepy So I told the boys on the barricade that I was leaving for Browarna and asked them not to shoot in case I had to make an undignified exit However, no one seemed to be in those houses, which were mostly burnt out. I got to a large courtyard where pieces of furniture and things had been scattered by the inhabitants who had probably tried to save them from the fire I went over to a table piled high with fallen bricks and rags to look for a shirt or something You know, I have only one shirt and I thought that I deserved another. To be sure, it's summer, but when my one and only is being washed I have to run around without any shirt, and I don't like it."

Here Yanosik noticed that I was getting impatient, and hastened to reassure me: "I'm coming to the point presently. As I was saying, I walked over to that table and began turning things over and knocking the bricks down quietly, so the Krauts would not hear me. It was dark, but I did not deem it advisable to use my flashlight, so I just acted on intuition and the feel of my fingers. Thus I found something that resembled a shirt. I investigated more carefully. It was a shirt, by Jove, a man's shirt! Then I found a few more stacked on the table. I gathered the shirts up in a bundle and I was just getting down to business when a glint caught my eye.

"I looked hard, and—damn it, if it wasn't a gun! That's funny, I thought, what would a gun be doing here? So I peered harder, and sure enough that gun was slung over a shoulder. I saw a long arm move cautiously, rummaging in the pile of things on the same table where my shirts were. And, what do you think? It was a Kraut who'd come to Browarna Street a-hunting! I have no idea how long we stood there with our behinds against each other before I noticed him. I still could not see his face. But I sensed that he saw me, too. We both stopped rummaging. I had my revolver in hand by then, and was just waiting for him to move incautiously. But he was cautious all right. And so was I, as a matter of fact. We stood there for quite a while in silence. Then we both sighed at once. It seemed loud, everything was so quiet around us. And we both began to move slowly, away from the table, he to the left, I to the right.

"I waited to see what he would do. I was afraid to shoot, because—gosh!—I had no way of knowing how many there were of them. He was probably afraid of the same thing. He did not even touch his gun. When he was a few steps away from that table, he moved quickly. So did I. He made a lot of noise, and I did not. That was the only difference. By now he's probably back at the University. Everything, as you see, is in perfect order. Your Uncle Yanosik in a surprise diplomatic move had signed a pact of non-aggression with the Kraut. If he won't tell on me, I won't tell on him. It's rather in step with the spirit of contemporary political agreements, don't you think? And that's the whole story for your prying eyes and gossipy ears."

I sat there, dumbfounded and tearful with laughter. There were four shirts in the bundle Yanosik had brought from his expedition. He kept only one for himself. The rest he gave to the boys. Yanosik was incorrigible, thank God.

I took some linen over to Madame Lubomirska's newly opened maternity hospital on Pieracki Street. Even during the carnival of death which accompanied the Uprising life surged onward. Madame Lubomirska took care of a large number of young women who had come there for childbirth. She took me to the nursery and showed me the tiny tots lying there, mostly without shirts or diapers. Many of the naked infants were crying.

"Like little Jesus," Madame Lubomirska said, striking a deep note in my heart, "without even swaddling clothes."

On Zlota Street I was caught in a large German air raid and was forced down into a shelter, despite my protests that as an officer of the Home Army I could go about my business in an air raid. The shelter at 7 Zlota Street was located in the basement of one of Warsaw's largest movie theatres, which had been taken over by the Germans for their exclusive use and renamed "Helgoland." On the way down, it struck me that this was the first time in five years that I had entered a movie house. All the films shown in Warsaw throughout the occupation were German-made and dripping with propaganda favoring the Nazi way.

The "Helgoland" shelter was spacious and comfortably equipped. There were about a thousand people there, mostly "permanent residents" since the first day of the Uprising. I passed between the rows of chairs arranged as in a theatre and tried to listen to the buzzing voices when a woman hailed me by name. It was my cousin, Yadviga, whom I had not seen in years. We had never been too friendly and her political convictions had estranged us even more. Yadviga was with her mother, her grandmother and her small son. She looked sharply at my Home Army armband, at my uniform, and her eyes grew hard.

"So you're one of them, too," she snapped. "One of

those evildoers who make us die uselessly! You ought to be ashamed of your crime!"

The blood rushed to my face. "How dare she!" I thought, but I checked myself.

"Yadviga, what are you saying? You, with your communistic beliefs, at that! You make *us* responsible for the crime of your own Soviet demigods? Are you out of your mind? Don't you know they called on us to rise against the Germans to help the advance of the Red Army? Don't you know they promised us every assistance and help? We believed them. That's our only crime, God knows. We believed that to fight the Germans was paramount for them as well as for us. You may laugh at us now, Yadviga, because we did believe in your Soviet friends, but you cannot hold us responsible for your suffering, for it's their doing."

"It's you and the likes of you that make us die for nothing!" Yadviga cried hysterically. "And may your children suffer for it."

"Yadviga, what are you saying!" her grandmother exclaimed in a colorless, tired voice. She turned to me, clasping her shaking hands, and begged me to forget Yadviga's words.

"She is wrong," the grandmother kept saying. "She will know some day how wrong she is. But please forgive Yadviga. She does not know what she is talking about. She is so young, and so afraid. But I am old, and no longer afraid. God bless you, my dear, and all you are doing."

I bent down to kiss the old, shaking hands which were so thin that they were almost transparent. Yadviga quieted down, and cried bitterly.

"I don't know what to do or where to go," she said. "I have food for only two more days. And you can see for yourself the way little Andrew looks. It breaks my heart. I lost my husband. I can't go on like this."

She looked at me pitifully and seized my hand.

"Please believe me," she said. "I want neither Russians nor Germans here. I only want to have some food for my child. And I want to have a place to sleep in. That's all I want." Her voice was now pathetic in its childish helplessness and bewilderment.

People had gathered around us. They hurled words in support of Yadviga's plea, bitter words which hurt like stones, words of despair, of cowardice, of condemnation. It was my turn now to feel bewildered.

"But we are fighting for your freedom," I argued.

They showed me their empty pots and drawn-in bellies.

"We are fighting for the future of your children."

They showed me sick, wan infants, their heads laid on the small bundles that constituted all the worldly possessions saved from their burning homes.

"Your own children and brothers and husbands are fighting on the barricades."

"They lied to us!" a woman called out hysterically. "My son told me that it would be over within a week. That the Russians would help us and enter Warsaw. He did not keep his word, and you won't keep yours, either."

What could I answer? None of them knew how hungry and exhausted we were. None of them knew how we fainted from nausea crawling through the filth and stench of the sewers. None of them knew as well as we did the tragedy of betrayal, the bitterness of being forsaken by one's allies on the field of battle.

The atmosphere of the shelter began to stifle me. I edged toward the door.

"Look at the Amazon!" somebody taunted me. "Running away from the truth, aren't you?"

I turned back, hot with indignation.

"I am not running away!" I fired. "I'm going back to my place which is on the barricade, not in the shelter."

Immediately I felt sorry and ashamed for my words. I knew that it was not cowardice that had driven these people to the shelters. I faced them then and began to speak the way one does to children, explaining things patiently, unraveling the knots.

I told them of the hardships endured by those who were doing the fighting. I told them of the many deaths we were suffering, and of the overflowing hospitals, and of the scarcity of ammunition and of the boys battling Tigers with ridiculous homemade weapons. I told them how we had to forage for food at the risk of our lives and how our children were suffering no less than theirs. And I spoke about our thwarted hopes for Russian help.

"If there is any fault, it is not ours. If there is a crime, we are not the ones who have committed it. Look into your conscience, search your souls and answer truthfully: Who is responsible for your sufferings?"

The crowd stood silent, their heads low, their eyes scanning the dirty floor of the shelter. From a far corner came a sneer, but around me the faces, though hard and bitter with pain, were not hostile. They knew I was right, but there was no strength left in them any more to uphold the right. What is it that can harden the human soul like unbending steel? These people, who had been hunted and tortured for five years, who had lost all they had and all they loved, who had seen their country despoiled and trodden down by heavy Nazi boots, had waited for the Great Day to come. When it came, the bells of the burning churches announced it loudly. Allies were to join hands in the liberated capital of Poland within five short days.

Nearly three weeks of fighting had now gone by, dreadful weeks of rotting in crowded cellars. And what did these weeks bring but the realization that the scanty help flown over hundreds of miles from Italy was not

enough to save us, and that Russian help would not come? Not in time, anyway. Not in time, though it was but a matter of a few minutes' flight for Soviet planes to reach us. And they knew the route so well. They had bombarded Warsaw so often before the Uprising, in those days when they had called upon us to rise, to fight, to expel the invader.

Almost three weeks of fighting had gone by and—with hope gone—the steel of human hearts turned into dead wood, easy to break. The very people who had hailed the soldiers of the Home Army in the first days of fighting, who had brought to the posts their meager provisions, their linen, their scanty medicines and their hot tears of wild joy, these same people began to waver at the spectre of loathsome death in their loyalty to the cause they had believed in so fervently.

Blind with tears, I climbed up the stairs and ran back to my post. I wanted to pray, but the words of the prayer were tangled in my mind. I clenched my fists at the thought of those whose grievous trespass against us we were told to forgive.

"What shall we do?" I wailed, squeezing my throbbing temples with both my hands. "Scholar, what shall we do? We can't hold on much longer, can we?"

"Well, what do you want us to do? Surrender to the Krauts?"

"Good Lord, no! But . . . perhaps you don't hear what I do going through the cellars. People are at their wits' end. And you can't blame them, either. They'll break down completely unless—yes, unless Soviet help arrives and the tide turns for the better."

Scholar shrugged his shoulders, and looked at me owlishly with his tired eyes.

"I don't know that it'll turn for the better," he said.

"But all the same it may interest you, Aneri, that those boys of the People's Army who have been lodging in our cellar finally got their fighting orders and left for Lower Powisle. Perhaps it means that the Soviets will eventually help us."

I wondered if it was not too late already.

THE NIGHT of August 18th, the unit of "gatherers" that the Sanitary Service had promised to send to us at the beginning of the month finally came to our post. The bodies they were to gather still lay on Browarna Street, a little beyond the burnt-out houses where Yanosik had gone prowling for shirts. Eighteen days of August heat had decayed the corpses so as to make them a menace to the health of the living.

The six boys who came to help us with our problem brought with them their dreadful equipment: ropes, huge paper bags, small anchors and long poles with hooks at the end, which they used to catch the clothes on the dead bodies and to drag them in.

We notified our posts about our expedition. Sweeper had assigned three of his boys to act as a cover, and off we went. Quietly, one by one, we darted across the street, trying not to attract the German searchlights and the German fire from the University.

Crouching in the ruins of a burned house, right opposite the University, we planned our next moves. After the bodies had been secured, we were going to bury them in the courtyard at 18 Topiel Street. One of the boys began to crawl noiselessly toward the place where the dead were lying. We watched in tense silence. A sheaf of light from the University fell on dark Browarna Street. Our boy lay still. The searchlight passed over his motionless body. Two more boys crawled out of our hide-out and joined the first one.

They worked in the dark. The job was especially difficult because of the decayed state of the corpses. Suddenly, we heard a resonant noise. One of the boys had

dropped his heavy hook. Immediately the German searchlights began to play, and soon the German machine guns barked madly. The boys out in the street lay flat, without moving. A searchlight went over them carefully once, then again. The enemy apparently decided that they, too, were dead. The searchlights went off.

The boys withdrew reluctantly. The first to reach us reported that the bodies fell to pieces when touched by the hooked poles and that they swarmed with rats that scurried for cover when our men approached. We held another council of war.

"It isn't worth while to lose our lives," one of the "gatherers" said. "You can't help them dead ones, anyhow."

"But it isn't the dead ones we're concerned about," I protested. "It's the living. The people who live in these houses around here can't breathe that infected air. We've got to do something about it."

"The lady's sure right," another "gatherer" declared, "what with them lousy rats running all over."

We decided to try to remove at least one body, the most obnoxious, which was that of a small boy, one of the first to be killed. It lay close to the still inhabited houses on the corner of Gesta Street, right near an iron fence enclosing a little garden facing the street. It seemed feasible to stretch out one's arm to touch his clothing. The plan was worth trying. Through tunnels and cellars and ditches we made our way to Gesta Street.

I had rubber gloves on and I offered to try to pull the boy's body over to the fence. There was not too much danger because our observer had told us that the Germans had that very morning removed their machine gun from their post on the University wall facing Gesta Street. Even in case of an unexpected German sortie, we had a good chance of escaping.

When we got to the corner house, I climbed out of the window and stealthily moved through the garden toward the fence gate which I opened as noiselessly as I could. Then I slipped out in the street where there was no cover. They could see me here very clearly if they turned their searchlights our way.

The dark patch formed by the dead boy was just a few steps away now. I crawled still closer and put out my hand. Then I saw a small cat sitting on top of the bloated corpse. It turned wild, bright eyes on me, and I withdrew my hand, suddenly scared and sickened. Then I stretched out my arm again. It reached the boy's leg. I grasped the thin ankle and pulled hard. With a screeching miaow the frightened cat jumped off the body, describing a high somersault. A bullet whizzed. The cat fell to the ground, a bleeding, messy blot. Another bullet went over my head. I retreated promptly.

We waited for a while, and then one of the boys ventured out again. He managed to drag the boy in with his long hook. At least part of our mission had been fulfilled. It was not possible to complete our task, not that night, anyway. The "gatherers" promised to come the next evening for another try. Meanwhile it seemed foolish to add to the number of the dead already scattered on Browarna Street.

Quite unexpectedly the Germans themselves solved our sanitary problem. Aroused by our prowling expedition, they made a sortie the following night. A short engagement ensued, but in the course of it the Germans managed to spray with gasoline and set afire the four houses facing the University on Browarna Street. The houses burned all night. When their walls finally crumbled down, the ruins built a merciful grave over the long-dead bodies of our neighbors.

Someone was pulling at my sleeve and shaking me

violently when I woke up. I sat up, brushing the sleep off my eyes.

"What is it, Scholar?" I asked. "What's happened?"

"Someone dripping to see you."

"Dripping?"

"With water," Scholar explained. "He just swam the Vistula. Come on, Aneri. Wake up. He's in a hurry. He's on his way to Headquarters."

Zaliwa was waiting at my desk. He was an officer from Rembertow whom I had met only once before, but who had unwittingly disclosed to me that my brother Yozek was in the Home Army, too. Zaliwa had mentioned as one of his collaborators a certain "Gypsy," which I recognized immediately as Yozek's childhood nickname.

"Did you come from Rembertow?" I asked. Since my parents lived there, I hoped for some news of them.

"No. From Praga."

"How did you get here, Zaliwa?"

We knew that the Germans had their gunboats on the Vistula keeping a sharp lookout for just such people as Zaliwa attempting to cross from the suburb of Praga on the right bank of the river.

"I swam across. It's pretty dark tonight and I wasn't making much noise so they didn't notice me."

"Well, if they had seen you, we wouldn't have you here," Yanosik observed calmly. "How about giving our guest some tea with wine, Aneri, and letting him change into those clothes Scholar brought for him?"

Yanosik poured for Zaliwa half a glass of vodka and I gave him an aspirin tablet. Then we besieged him with questions about Praga.

"What's happened there? Why did the Uprising die so quickly at Praga?"

Zaliwa was not talkative.

"I know nothing," he said shortly. "I'm a courier from Praga to Headquarters."

"What's it like there, now?"

"Bad. No traffic in the streets. The stores are closed, but there is enough to eat because it's closer to the country. All the streets running east terminate at German artillery posts. The Soviets are a stone's throw away."

I listened, thinking all the time about my parents and about Yozek. Suddenly it seemed so difficult to inquire about them.

"And Rembertow?" I finally asked in a voice so low I was afraid Zaliwa would not hear me. But he did hear. Obviously he had been waiting for my question. His face grew tired and sad. There was a moment of silence. The boys knew my family was in Rembertow. Zaliwa spoke with an effort:

"What can I tell you? I left Rembertow with my men when we received the orders to come to your rescue here, in the city. We ran into a strong unit of Cossacks serving with the Germans. We had to fight our way through to Praga. It was bad. And when we finally got there, decimated and haggard, there was no more Uprising there. One of my men brought me the news that all my family had been murdered by the Germans after I left Rembertow."

"And...and my parents? Don't you know anything?"

"Don't tell her!" Scholar shouted. "She's had enough. I know her. She can't bear any more! Don't tell her!"

I wheeled around. I did not recognize my own screaming voice when I faced Scholar.

"Shut up!"

Zaliwa looked at me now—straight in the eyes.

"If you must know," he said, "Wicek brought me a report from Rembertow that they dragged them out of the houses and killed them with machine-gun fire."

Yanosik was talking softly in my ear: "After all, this is nothing but hearsay." Andrew stroked my cheeks with clumsy boyish hands. Scholar brought me a glass of

vodka and stood a few steps away looking at me piteously, like a beaten dog. I gulped down the drink, and waited a long minute, till the pieces fell back in order, till Zaliwa's thin-lipped mouth came into focus again.

"And Yozek?" I asked. The short words came out with difficulty, as if there were an iron clasp on my throat.

"I don't know. We left Rembertow at the same time, but he and his men took a different road."

In a few minutes, Zaliwa left our post for Headquarters.

I sat on my cot, trying to recall when I had seen my parents last. They had been left all alone in Rembertow. And yet there were six of us in the family. Stashek was in England. There was no news from him. Yozek was with the Home Army. Wanda, thrown out of her home, had tried to live in a small village; and two of her children had been taken to Germany for forced labor. Yadviga had left Warsaw on orders a few weeks before the Uprising; where was she now? Zosia was the youngest of us, only twenty; for five years she had lived in hiding, the first news I had of her, after the German invasion of Poland, was through posters on Warsaw walls, promising a reward for any information concerning her whereabouts: the Germans said she was wanted for murder! My parents must have died alone.*

Zaliwa came back two days later. It was a dark night again, and the German anti-aircraft were spitting out luminous balls of color, ripping the sky in search of planes that tried to bring us help. We heard the growl of motors from afar and our hearts nearly died in us, for, though we yearned for them, we dreaded to see them fly into the teeth of the German anti-aircraft. One night we had seen four Allied planes burst in flames over our heads, and we helplessly had to watch the death of those who had tried to save us. The crew of one of these four planes

* Months after the end of the war, news reached me in the United States that they had miraculously escaped from Rembertow.

had bailed out and landed in our sector, to take active part later in our fight. With hopeful hearts and eager prayers did we follow the course of the few Allied planes that would occasionally fly over Warsaw. But not even once did we see a Russian plane.

"I'm going back," Zaliwa said. "In two days a liaison girl from Praga ought to reach your post. Please take good care of her. She will bring the last message from us to Headquarters. She is to remain in Warsaw."

"And you?"

"It's all in God's hands."

I knew the Vistula well. I have never been afraid of any water but that of our own treacherous river. It was not too wide near Warsaw, but was full of whirlpools in most unexpected places. One would wade through shallow water and then, suddenly, a mighty undertow would drag one deep down, leaving even a good swimmer limp from exhaustion. And Zaliwa was to swim across right near the Kierbedz Bridge, where the German anti-aircraft post was.

I stayed up that night, praying for Zaliwa's safety. The town of Rembertow was in my mind again. I remembered getting off at the station and being met by German gendarmes who drove us all to the square, where a tall gallows loomed. Six bodies were swaying on it. At their feet was a huge placard on which was written in Polish **SUCH IS THE JUST PUNISHMENT METED OUT BY THE REICH TO COMMUNISTS**. I saw my mother in the crowd, sobbing loudly, and calling for God's mercy.

The Germans labeled us Communists.

The Soviets labeled us Fascists.

And somewhere, in the middle of the treacherous river a man was working his way across, wearily, stubbornly. From one enemy—to the other.

Zaliwa's messenger girl, Ela, came to us the second night after his departure. She was so tiny and fragile that

we marveled how she could have swum across the Vistula. Ela was tired, drenched to the bone, and her teeth chattered from the cold.

I took her down to the shelter, undressed her, and rubbed her slim body with alcohol. She drank a glass of vodka. Then I wrapped her up in a blanket, gave her a hot-water bottle and ordered her to sleep.

Yanosik hovered over Ela the way a hen does over her favorite chick. He could not take his eyes off her pale childish face and her big green eyes with their long lashes. When she fell asleep, he locked the entrance to the shelter, barricaded it with a heavy armchair, sat down in it with determination and announced that he was not going to let anyone bother Ela while she slept.

Rather amused at his performance, I shrugged my shoulders and told him not to worry, as no one was going to bother the girl anyway.

"You don't know them," he scowled. "They have no heart at Headquarters."

I was at the station busy with some wounded when Sweeper came in with a strange young man. He waited until I had finished. Then he introduced the officious-looking visitor: "This is Lieutenant Kret. He came to take Ela to Headquarters. We ought to wake her up, I think," he added with embarrassment.

I went down to the shelter where I stumbled over Yanosik sprawling in his armchair. He pretended not to understand what I was talking about.

"Don't be an ass, Yanosik. Don't you know what orders are?"

"I know that that girl could have died ten times over. She could have drowned, she could have been shot, she could have been frightened to death. Let her sleep now, I tell you."

"But this is important."

"Well, then, let him take the papers and be damned!"

Yanosik burst out. I was taken aback, for I had never heard Yanosik curse before.

Lieutenant Kret came with Sweeper, and Yanosik asked him to step aside.

"Do you swim, Lieutenant?" he asked earnestly.

"No, I do not."

Yanosik threw up his hands in despair.

"How can I talk with you then? Well, I'll try, anyhow. You see, Lieutenant, that girl swam the Vistula. You wouldn't know what the Vistula is if you don't swim. But let me tell you, Lieutenant, it's plenty disagreeable in broad daylight, with people all around to come to the rescue. Can you imagine that little girl doing it, with all the searchlights on the river, and the Germans everywhere with their cannon, and the whirlpools and..."

He went on and on, describing what Ela had gone through until Lieutenant Kret shivered and exclaimed sincerely: "I wouldn't like to have her assignment."

"So what do you think that girl deserves now?" Yanosik asked with a sneer.

"The Cross of Valor," answered Lieutenant Kret unhesitatingly.

Yanosik caught his troubled head in his hands and, in dismay, shook it from side to side. Then he tried again politely. "My dear Lieutenant, by right we should all get your Crosses of Valor, but you can just stuff your chimney with them. That girl ought to get a few hours of sleep now!"

At this point Yanosik was beaten by his own weapon. Ela pounded on the closed door from within, calling to be let out.

"I don't want to sleep any more," she called. "I'm hungry. Please give me something to eat."

Yanosik jumped up immediately and dragged his barricade aside. Ela scrambled out of the shelter, shook her cropped hair and repeated plaintively: "I'm so hungry."

She looked quite like a large porcelain doll, and I had a flitting temptation to press her in the middle and see whether she would not speak in a doll's monotone. "Mam-ma, mam-ma." Kret stood there startled, he did not expect Ela to look like a Dresden doll. But most amusing was Yanosik. I had never seen him scared before but he looked it now. He did not quite know how to behave, was "it" breakable or not, and what did one do about "it"? He stood there uncertainly, like a dog wagging his tail, and stared at Ela in dumb admiration. I could see that for that little girl Yanosik would be sure to bring twice as many tomatoes from the Germans' vegetable garden and twice as many shirts from the burnt-out houses in the enemy's backyard and snatch a few of God's bright stars for good measure from under the German curtain of fire.

We gave her something to eat and she told us a little about herself. She was almost twenty. She had been swimming ever since she could remember walking. Surrounded by our admiration, she sat there calmly, a little guardedly I thought, but without displaying any self-consciousness. There was not a trace of affectation in her manner. She swallowed the last morsel, blew her nose in a crumpled tiny handkerchief, smoothed her overalls, and said it was time to go.

We watched her disappear behind the barricade on Drewniana Street with Lieutenant Kret, who was trotting humbly beside her.

I never saw her again.

It was no longer safe for Barbarka to sleep upstairs, even in the back room. The walls of my apartment began to look more and more like a sieve, the windowpanes were shattered and several of my books, in the quiet of the bookcase, were destroyed by German bullets. The moment came when something had to be done about it.

I had hoped all along that I would not have to liquidate my apartment. To break up my home seemed to me like giving in to evil premonitions. If things were scarified by German bullets, they were still in their places, and one could pretend that life was normal and that this was still a home. But the upper floors were too exposed to destruction to be livable.

Scholar and Andrew, while off duty, came to help me pack.

"O, Mother of Bad Inventions!" Andrew exclaimed, looking at the holes in the walls and the shattered door to the balcony of my room. "This is a nice, airy summer apartment, no doubt about it. The landlord ought to raise your rent, Aneri, for the latest improvements."

I packed our clothes into suitcases and put the books in large wooden cases. My paintings, wrapped and tied, I decided to take down to the cellar. I hesitated at the drawers of my desk, full of letters from my late husband, some photographs and a few other souvenirs more important to me than anything else in the whole apartment. I wanted to have them all in one package, which I could take wherever I went. But there was nothing handy for the purpose.

"I'll do it later," I told Scholar.

He said nothing, but I felt his thought: "Perhaps there'll be no later."

Standing on the piano, in Barbarka's room there was a picture of me. From the hall I saw Scholar discreetly tucking it away in his pocket. Obviously, he did not want to be seen.

Several neighbors had together planned to take part of the cellar space and wall up all their more precious belongings there. My neighbor across the hall was moving downstairs practically all her possessions, even the furniture.

"You see," she explained, "even if the whole building

burns down, the walls in the cellar should keep the fire out. We will have saved something at least."

I nodded politely, but declined the invitation to join them. I could not impart to her my fears that all their ingenuity would probably prove of no avail, that everything would be destroyed here, including ourselves.

Dysentery spread among the soldiers and civilians at an appalling speed. Our physicians and nurses fought it with all the means at our disposal, but could not check the evil.

To aggravate the disease, there was no more running water at our post. The other posts had been deprived of water even earlier, before August 20th. We had to bring it in buckets from either of two nearby wells, where we had to wait long for our turn, because they were used by the civilian population of the entire sector. It was not until some time later that special hours were established for soldiers and nurses, twice a day. One does not realize how indispensable water is every hour of the day until there is none. We had to drag dozens of heavy buckets every day for washing, for laundry and for use in the kitchen.

On the same long-dreaded day when our water had stopped running completely even in the basements, Colonel Matylda held a briefing with her women-officers from the various sectors. She told me that she had recommended me for a decoration. I am afraid I did not show proper enthusiasm and appreciation. Everybody, I felt, deserved Crosses of Valor these days. There was no point in conferring them at all, except perhaps for some very outstanding deeds of heroism. But I could not boast of any such deed. Whatever I had done, others had done as much and more. So I thanked Matylda duly, and asked her whether she could offer us any information as to the mission of the Soviet liaison officer, Captain Kalugin, and

why he had come to our Warsaw Headquarters if the Soviets were not going to help us.

"I'm sorry, I have no information to give," Colonel Matylda said. "All I know is that Captain Kalugin has sent his report to Soviet authorities urging them to help us. So far, as you know, without any results. Today's papers carry the news that the Soviet High Command has refused shuttle bases to American and British planes that were to bring us aid from Great Britain. They had planned to drop arms and supplies for us and land behind the Soviet lines, so as to avoid having to make the long trip back without a break. But in view of the Soviet refusal of the shuttle bases—well, we may as well face it—probably they won't come at all."

We were flabbergasted, as none of us had had an opportunity to see the papers. We could not believe what we heard.

"Is . . . is that authentic . . . I mean, is it official?" someone stammered.

"Unfortunately it is no mere rumor. It is true!" Matylda answered steadily.

"Why didn't they, why didn't they say so?" the same half-breaking voice went on. There was a moment of silence. The girl tried to gain control over herself. Then she broke down completely. A flood of words burst out, sobbing, panting, breathless.

"Why didn't they say right away, 'We'll give you no help. You are to die!' in an honest, straightforward way? . . . Did they have to wash their hands in our blood, together with the Nazis, in 1939 and 1940 and 1941, in order to shake hands with the West now, to join the United Nations? And the diplomatic luncheons in Moscow, with their promises and handsome words. 'Russia wants to see a strong, free and independent Poland.' . . . They called on us to fight, and all the time they had a knife hidden to stab us in the back! We don't need to die!

Let them be honest once at least, in this last hour, and tell us why, why are we to die, when we could live! Let them answer honestly!"

Colonel Matylda went over to the hysterical girl and laid a steady hand on her trembling shoulder.

"Come on! Snap out of it!" she said curtly.

I dragged my heavy feet back to the Red Cross station. The loneliness of our struggle was much greater now than in the first week of the Uprising. It became clear to everybody after weeks of waning illusions that we had been deserted by our Soviet ally. And now hope itself deserted us.

CHAPTER 11 THE BEGINNING OF THE END

IN THE morning of August 28th the heavy drone of many planes brought us out into the street. It was most unusual for the Germans to use a large number of planes in one flight. They did not have to. Their airfields were too close and their safety too unchallenged, either from the ground or from the air, to require massed air power over Warsaw.

But that morning twenty-one planes passed over us, flying in orderly formations of seven each. We tilted back our heads and squinted our eyes to see them better.

"Soviet perhaps?" someone ventured.

"I doubt it," another voice answered tartly. "Perhaps British or American."

Within a moment all our doubts were dispelled. We saw the swastikas on the planes—German. They flew eastward, passed over the Old Town, then turned back and, circling above us again, flew eastward once more. And then we saw them drop their loads of death on the Old Town. At first we heard no explosions. Then, nests of flames burst out beyond, and we could see the Old Town go up in fire and smoke. So these were the ill-famed "umbrella-bombs"! They opened low over the target and incendiaries fell out of their bellies. But they dropped other bombs, too, demolition bombs. From our post, speechless, we watched the planes and the destruction they spread. Our mouths were dry and our ears ached from the roar of explosions.

Suddenly, one of the German planes swerved sharply on its course. It tried to regain its balance and its altitude. In queer zigzags it slid down to earth. Then it plummeted

like a heavy stone There was an explosion and another burst of flames

That afternoon *The Republic* carried the news that a German plane had been shot down over the Old Town by machine-gun fire, and had crashed with its load. None of its crew had been saved. It was a lucky break for us, for it was not often that one shot down a plane that way.

The afternoon paper also contained a brief account of the situation in the Old Town. No more intact houses were left standing there, and our posts had moved underground to the spacious caves, from which they daily made several sorties against the Germans. They fought on, but the fight could not continue much longer there. It was clear that, in careful, measured words, *The Republic* was preparing us for the fall of the Old Town.

Prominently displayed in the paper was an appalling story of German treachery told by the only survivor of the Home Army unit which had been stationed in the Mostowski Mansion. Cut off from our other units, our boys there held on, hoping that eventually they would be rescued. They had run out of food and their supplies of ammunition were ridiculously low. They still maintained some contact with one post on Długa Street, and they sent out desperate radio signals for help.

No wonder they were delighted one fine morning to see a large detachment of well-armed men, who wore the red-and-white armbands of the Home Army, approaching their post. Our boys at the Mostowski Mansion saw from a distance that the newcomers, who were marching on the quick, were bringing a few light machine guns with them. There could be no doubt that the long-awaited rescue was finally coming. Apparently this was a company of the Home Army which had captured some Germans and taken their arms for their besieged comrades.

Our boys had come out of hiding, shouting a joyous welcome to the rescue party. The men in the first ranks

of the oncoming unit waved back and shouted, too. Then, when they got close enough, the men who wore the Home Army armbands opened fire. Our boys had no arms with them. They fell, mowed down almost to the last one. The dying soldiers on the pavement saw the Germans calmly take off their red-and-white armbands and, with mocking laughs of triumph, enter the Mostowski Mansion. Only one man from that post miraculously escaped and lived to tell the story of the ruse.

Now, again the German planes swooped down over our heads. I dropped the paper, grabbed Barbarka's hand and pulled her after me. We ran down the stairs to the shelter. There was the deafening whistle of a falling bomb, followed by the roar of a close explosion. One... two... three... The plaster fell off the walls in big chunks. It was hard to breathe in the gray-black clouds of plaster dust which got into our throats and noses. After a long while I managed to open my eyes. People around me were either sitting or lying down, all holding their hands to their ears. Barbarka hung on to me. She was crying.

"Is it our house?" a colorless, dust-choked voice asked.

We began getting up, cautiously shaking our arms and legs. Upstairs, the street was littered knee-high with debris. The scratchy dust made us all cough. Sweeper with his boys and the residents of Topiel Street came out to see the extent of the damage. The German planes now turned back and again circled low over our heads, but without dropping any bombs and without strafing us with their machine guns. They, too, were probably appraising the destruction.

Four houses away from our Red Cross station, where No. 19 Topiel Street used to be, there was nothing but a messy heap of bricks. The four-story building had crumbled down like a toy house built of cards. The debris had closed all the entrances to the cellar. We stood there

stunned for a moment, thinking with mounting horror of those trapped in the basement of the destroyed house, of the women, children, sick and aged. Then we sprang into action feverishly. No one knew how to remove the huge, smouldering pile that had crashed around the cellar, cutting off all ways of escape from the interior. But we tackled what seemed like an impossible task, for there was no choice in our horror and despair.

Barbarka clamored to stay with me and help in the rescue, but I sent her back to the station. She dared not protest.

We set to work, pulling at the twisted iron girders and jagged blocks of walls. After an hour's labor, we opened a passage to the narrow corridor leading to the shelter. It was filled up with wreckage, and we could not get through. We would pull at splintered planks sticking out of the debris only to bring down a new avalanche of scrap. Rescue squads from the neighboring street came to help us. Some of the men pounded on the wall of the cellar to let the trapped people know of our efforts to save them.

Our arms grew heavy and ached from the strain of the task. Yet, although time was passing, we were still far from reaching the entrance.

Ambroziak, the janitor of the adjoining house, suddenly jumped up, slapped his forehead and ran to the other side of No. 19, which faced the vegetable gardens. I ran after him. Ambroziak lay down on a flat block of ruined wall and began to dig furiously. He pulled, puffed, kicked and tore at things. Then he straightened up. His blackened, dirty face, streaked with sweat, was beaming at me.

"We'll get 'em out," he declared.

I lay down beside him, and he showed me an iron door that he had exposed. Through it, he explained, one could get to the cellar. But we had to do it soon or the imprisoned folks might be stifled to death.

Just then the German planes returned. They came very low and sprayed our street with machine-gun fire. We fell flat on the pavement and scrambled for cover wherever we could find it.

The people down there in the basement struggled for each breath. We heard weak pounding on the iron door we were to break open, but we could not move. Every time someone moved, the machine guns would bark again, spitting death.

We lay there for hours, till there was no more strength left in me to endure the sharp bricks that cut into my abdomen and my breasts and the barbed wire that bruised my legs. Yet we waited patiently, closing our eyes for a second only when the bullets hit the pavement right near us. We could not let the people down below die.

As suddenly as they had come, the Germans flew away. We breathed freely again. From all sides there was a rush to Ambroziak's iron door in the ground. Someone brought a crowbar and the door was pried open.

A child, tiny Irenka, was the first to emerge from the cellar. She was the daughter of the janitor of No. 19. Then we pulled out a woman with one eye popping out of its bloody socket. One after another, we rescued all the victims. Miraculously, no one had died, but one man was gravely wounded. He was very stout, and we had great difficulty in extricating him through the narrow opening. Our nurses had their hands full.

We returned to the station dead tired, swooning on our feet. I found Barbarka on her knees, washing the floor. A bucket of bloody water was near her. Half of the floor was still smeared with blood. I felt my knees shake. Red and black spots whirled before my eyes.

"What happened, Barbarka?" I stammered.

She looked up at me from the blood on the floor, and her round, childish face was streaming with tears.

"Yanosik," she said.

I slumped down on the wet floor beside her, put my arms around her and burst out crying. Could it be that Yanosik, with his kind gaiety and unassuming heroism, was gone forever? We sat there, crying together, Barbarka on my shoulder, I into her tousled blond hair, seized by uncontrollable grief over the death of Yanosik, who was Life itself

On my cot, in a puddle of blood, lay the shirt Yanosik had picked up on his night prowl in the German backyard that was once Browarna Street.

This was the beginning of the real struggle for Powisle, our sector. Two nights and two days, aflame with battle, followed. Browarna Street died in fire, then Gesta Street, then part of Leszczynska Street where Sergeant Putkowski's machine-gun nest was still defending the barricade. Heavy shells pulverized the walls of one house after another. Spitting machine guns drove people away from the streets. Everybody lived in cellars like rats.

The third day was quieter. It was August 31st, the day of doom for the Old Town.

On that day, the forces of the Home Army defending the Old Town were ordered to withdraw. The only way of retreat open to them was through the sewers, which were now even more dreadful than before. They were clotted with the bodies of those who had not survived the trip and had drowned in sludge. And yet the soldiers of the Home Army, accompanied by some civilians, took to that Golgotha road. Staying behind in the Old Town were the wounded in the hospitals and their staffs, over three hundred nurses, doctors and priests who refused to leave. Altogether a population of about thirty thousand remained in the Old Town. Only two thousand were scheduled to escape through the sewers.

On August 31st, the eve of the fifth anniversary of Germany's attack upon Poland, we were ordered to stand

by at the exit from the sewers. Everybody went there. Behind the barricade on Warecka Street, I joined a large group of nurses waiting for the first men to emerge from the slummy catacombs. Barbarka came and stood with Zofia, a few steps away, holding tight her hand.

On the barricade a man with a movie-camera was sitting and filming the scene. I watched him and wondered whether his pictures would ever get to the faraway world, and, if they did, would people ever believe them to be genuine.

Soon human beings from the Old Town began climbing up the iron ladder from the sewers, and we hoisted them up through the manhole to the street. They were mostly skeletons. Emaciated beyond belief, their pale skin hung limply on the protruding bones of their faces and their bodies. The women were dumb with suffering. An endless procession of bloody ghosts, armless, legless, faceless, went on and on, their wounds caked with the filth of the sewers. On and on they came, till our arms felt like lead from the labor of pulling them out and carrying them aside.

The worst cases were taken immediately to the quarters of the Napoleon Café, right through a gaping hole in its wall. The stretcher-bearers went back and forth between the café and Napoleon Square in an endless queue.

Those who were strong enough to move by themselves sat woodenly on the pavement, looking around with blinking eyes, marveling that here was still a piece of Warsaw where at least stumps of houses remained standing and where a whole barricade on Warecka Street was still intact.

A small boy climbed out of the manhole. He carried two grenades hanging from his leather belt, and a revolver. He stood there, shading his eyes, and looking at us and at the street.

"You have houses here!" he finally exclaimed in astonishment.

A woman came out. Her eyes were wild. She had lost her child somewhere in the sewers. Wringing her hands, she ran from one child to another, peering into dirty faces, pushing their stringy hair off their eyes, shrieking hysterically as she called the name of her child in an animal cry.

Barbarka stood at a small table, handing out glasses of water mixed with wine, and salting the contents generously with tears. We all cried as we lifted them out of the manhole and wiped their faces and removed the filthy rags from their wounds to make room for clean bandages.

A shriveled-up old woman was helped out of the sewer. Her frail body was wrapped up in lace curtains, tied together somehow. That was all she had on. She staggered on the pavement, looked around, screwed up her face in anger and called shrilly: "The coach! Where is my coach? I'm in a hurry! The coach for Madame la Comtesse! I can't be too late at the ball. The Ambassador is waiting. Where is my coach?" Zofia took her and calmed her better than any of us ever could.

Two seven-year-olds were next to be hoisted out of the hole. The gay Barbara W., who never learned that most questions had better go unasked, put her arms around the two children, swallowed her tears and asked them about their parents. The little boy, holding the girl's hand, and the little girl, holding onto her brother's hand, looked at Barbara pathetically, without answering. Then, their small, dirty fists flew up to their eyes, which they began rubbing with quick, determined gestures, smearing dirt and tears all over their faces. Their parents had been left in the Old Town. There was no larger cemetery in Warsaw in those days.

Some of the Home Army men came up from the sewers in good shape. They stood in orderly ranks, ever growing,

waiting for their commanding officer. The first detachment ready to march to their new post was the *Chrobry* Unit to which we had been assigned during our three-day stay in the Old Town, from August 9th to 12th. It was a large unit, and some two hundred men gathered on Warecka Street waiting for their captain. Through tunnels and passages I led them to 29 Złota Street, and returned to the manhole again.

A small boy standing on Warecka Street attracted my attention when I approached our barricade. Even from a distance there seemed something familiar about him. I came closer and recognized Piotrek, the only son of Bożena, my good friend. Bożena's husband had been killed by the Germans on August 1st, at 2:30 P.M., when he was on his way to his post carrying a package of ammunition. Passing in a green car, they shot him in the street an hour before the Uprising began. Bożena was working in one of our hospitals in the Old Town. Seeing Piotrek here, alone, I felt fear creep up my throat again.

"And your mother, Piotrek, where is she?"

"She remained with the wounded," the boy answered. "She told me to go. She was very angry when I wanted to stay with her. She said I should get out of the Old Town, find a troop of boy scouts and continue with my work in the mid-city sector. Can you tell me, please, where I can report to work?"

I took him to Mrs. Rawska on Gorski Street, where he received a new assignment. I would have given a great deal for the right to tell the boy how much I admired him. But he would not have understood, and I could not find words good enough and simple enough. So I just said good-bye and ran back to my job.

For three days and three nights the sewers continued to spit out the mangled wrecks of men, women and children. Some two thousand of them passed through our

hands. Then Lieutenant Mewa, Colonel Matylda's aide, came to me, hobbling on her swollen legs. She brought new orders. "We must organize laundries for the Old Towners. There is no water at all in mid-city. You must do something here."

Immediately I thought of the Fuchs chocolate factory, where they had a well of their own and big washing machines and huge cauldrons. Jerzy Fuchs, the young proprietor, was most cooperative, and I felt sure that he would help us out. Haunted by all I had seen, I walked rapidly to the factory grounds.

Just as I had thought, Jerzy Fuchs promised to take care of the laundry for the people from the Old Town. His laundry had been serving the neighboring hospitals and some of our units, too. Now its work was to be doubled.

He took me on a tour. I went through the large kitchens of the factory. Jerzy Fuchs fed six hundred people, his own workers, who had been caught here by the outbreak of the Uprising. Besides, R.G.O.—the Central Welfare Council, a citizens' organization—operated its kitchen here. At the time we were making the rounds, many hundreds of people were standing in line waiting for their soup. It was tasty and smelled good, but it had an unpleasant dark color, due to the fact that the cauldrons in which it was cooked could not be scoured now.

Before returning home I stopped at Fuchs' office. He wanted to show me a letter he had written to the Quartermaster of the Home Army, who sought to requisition the factory's supplies of sugar and flour. But Fuchs pleaded that he was feeding his own people and was in addition helping out the enormous R.G.O. kitchen. I told him I was sure the Quartermaster would not take more than a small part of his supplies.

He brought out a paper bag filled with small cookies which he was in the habit of giving me for the children

in my sector I never failed to distribute his sweet crackers religiously and with ridiculous fairness among the little ones. Fuchs was bidding me good-bye at the gate of the factory when the German planes came over us again, for the second time that day.

We hastily went down to the factory shelter, an enormous and well-managed room. Only a part of its permanent inhabitants, a thousand people or so, were there at the time of the air raid. The rest were up in the kitchen, in line for their daily rations, or working in the laundry or in the stores. We heard the planes swooping down in a sharp whirlpool of air, and we each harbored our own fears, not daring to talk or look around. The blasts of bombs almost tore our eardrums to shreds and, instinctively, we cowered still more. Then there was no more bombing. Piercing cries and howls rent the air.

Jerzy Fuchs was the first of us, I think, to move. He went up the stairs and I followed him, slowly, for we were still shaken. Other people moved behind us.

The courtyard was in havoc. The German bombers had scored a direct hit on the kitchen building. I feared to look there. When I did look at last, after a long-drawn moment tense with horror, the sight made me numb. A wave of nausea sickened me. Nothing was left of the kitchen building. From the heaps of ruins protruded dismembered bodies and torn-off limbs. Hunks of human flesh were strewn around and puddles of clotted blood were mixed with the thick soup spilled from the huge cauldrons. Our nostrils were filled with the smells of fresh blood, raw flesh, steaming gruel and brick-dust.

The laundry building, too, was no more. The old roof had tumbled over the pile of debris, like a huge mushroom that was falling apart from decay.

I saw a man lying flat on his face in the gateway of the factory and I walked over to him on leaden feet, praying that he would be dead, too, so that I would not have to

look into his dying eyes begging for help I could not give. My arms and my hands were no longer supple and sure, but limp and flaccid.

The man was alive. He was not even wounded. He was suffering from a bad case of shock. Within half an hour he was up on his feet again and was even helping us dig through the wreckage.

The water main had apparently been broken, for now the shelter and the basements of the Fuchs factory were all under water, which gushed out into the steeply sloping street. The water surged on and was running down toward my Red Cross station and on toward Sweeper's post.

This is how the Old Town came to us, in Powisle, with all its horror. Perhaps none of us thought of it then in just those terms. However, we all hoped to live up to the glory which was the Old Town's not only in its death, but also in its fabulous stoicism.

Danuta went out on patrol duty without orders and, when she came back wounded, with two fingers of her right hand torn to shreds, I first made a dressing for her and then gave her a sound scolding. She begged me not to tell Sweeper what she had done or that she was wounded. Just then Lieutenant Zbych from the mid-city sector arrived unexpectedly. He used to live in our quarter before the Uprising. It was but a short time since he had been released from the Pawiak Prison, and the hair on his shaved head was not yet fully grown. He seemed very tired and very upset.

"Will Powisle be able to defend itself?" I asked childishly.

Lieutenant Zbych was silent for a very long moment. Then he said: "I came here to take my wife away."

There was no need for further comments. And yet, I said to myself that Zbych's wife was pregnant and so he

had a special reason for his mission. But women began to come to me and to Zofia and ask us "Is it true, madame, that the Army will not be able to hold this post? What'll happen to us then?"

I knew no answer. The responsibility for these women and children lay heavily on my shoulders. I went to Lieutenant Pobog, to Command 2 4.

"Aren't there any orders concerning the civilians, Lieutenant?" I asked. "About their evacuation, I mean. They can't possibly stay in Powisle."

But Lieutenant Pobog had so far received no orders. Going back to the post, I thought over the situation. The Germans now dominated our district from three sides. Their cannon shelled us from the Kierbedz and Poniatowski Bridges, as did the gunboats on the Vistula. There was only one precarious avenue of escape open to us, in the direction of Napoleon Square, through a tortuous net of the underground passages.

But what were we to do with the non-combatants? I had heard long before that the civilians from Zulawski and Zorawia Streets, unable to bear any longer the supreme hardships of living under siege, had surrendered to the Germans, never expecting that their lot could possibly get worse.

Ever since August 8th we had heard blood-curdling reports about the Pruszkow Camp. Pruszkow was about a dozen miles from Warsaw. Those of us who knew the place could not imagine at first where the Germans could possibly keep large numbers of prisoners, unless it be in the open, behind barbed wire enclosures. But still they herded thousands of innocent civilians from the sectors of Warsaw which they held, as well as all those military or civilians who fell into their hands in other districts, and drove them into Pruszkow. There they held them in dreadful sanitary conditions, with little medical care and even less food.

We never knew whether this German policy was adopted mainly as a measure of extermination or whether it was aimed at breaking the morale of the Home Army soldiers whose families were being annihilated in cold blood, in retaliation for the Uprising. Whatever the purpose, Pruszkow Camp served both ends. People perished there by hundreds and by thousands. Every day new carloads were brought in. And yet every time a new report from Pruszkow was broadcast by one of our radio stations, our determination to kill Nazis and fight to the end grew more dogged than ever.

OUR POST smelt like a sewer. A German grenade had smashed the plumbing in the house, and the rooms were partly flooded. The scene was that of a battle-field, with pieces of broken furniture all around, and shattered window glass and trash underfoot. Sweeper's room was not so bad, though the telephone was out of order.

"I guess they won't attack us tonight," Sweeper mused. "We can put up some of the boys here."

"Sweeper," I said, "don't you think we ought to open a passage from house to house on the third floors by breaking through the walls?"

"What for?"

"In case we are forced to retreat. Tanks are most effective on the ground and against the first floor. But their fire never reaches the third floor."

"But they won't attack us with tanks here. Not from Obozna Street, because the slope there is too steep. And not from Browarna, because we have no barricade there and we'll be able to hold them off with the means put at our disposal."

"And what are these means, I'd like to know?"

"I asked Pobog to assign to us the anti-tank weapons withdrawn from the Old Town."

"Are you in your right mind, Sweeper, or is your imagination running away with you? How in heaven's name could they evacuate anti-tank guns from the Old Town?"

"Through the sewers," he answered quietly. The very thought made me gulp.

"When do you think we'll get them?"

"Tomorrow, I think Krybar knows perfectly well that we are in the front-line now, here at this post, and in this sector anyway"

Sweeper then asked Scholar and me to walk with him to the observation point. One of the boys was there, watching the University through field glasses. He had earphones on and every few minutes he would report on the movements of the enemy. I looked through the glasses and was startled to see a German soldier so near that it seemed as if I could touch him by merely stretching out my hand. The glasses brought him six times closer than he actually was. From the depths of a widespread chestnut tree the long muzzle of an ack-ack gun, camouflaged by branches and leaves, peered out. I counted five such ack-ack nests. On a ladder, leaning against the wall which faced Browarna Street, stood another German, carefully watching that sector. Many others milled behind the University walls. And it was rather maddening to see them there, smug and secure, amply provided with quantities of arms and ammunition.

"No new movements. They're all in their places," the observer reported.

Sweeper spat, and turned to us. "Let's go down," he said; "it's time to have a bite. I told you they wouldn't attack us tonight."

Madame Bronislava met us downstairs with tears in her beautiful eyes. A German shell had burst in her room, where all the food had been stored, and had destroyed everything, including a wall.

"Why, I won't have anything but water for your supper," she wailed, "and even that has not yet been fetched from the well."

We scraped up a few things from here and there, enough to keep off the worst hunger, but Bronislava was still disconsolate at the thought of future meals.

"There is nothing," she repeated emphatically, "but

absolutely nothing!" And she showed Sweeper the open palms of her outstretched hands to illustrate how empty her larder was.

"Why should you worry, Madame Bronislava?" Sweeper jested. "You'll have a well-deserved vacation from cooking."

"You're always joking, Lieutenant. This is nothing to joke about. Jokes don't sit well on an empty stomach."

"Well, it won't hurt us a bit. 'Doctor' Aneri claims it actually does one good not to burden the liver and stomach. She is at the moment writing an illuminating treatise on the subject."

He would have gone on and on, but I boxed his ears to bring him back to reality.

"What shall we do?" I asked anxiously. "The boys must eat something. Madame Bronislava is right, Sweeper. This is no time for joking."

Sweeper was whistling between his teeth, and I knew he had something up his sleeve.

"What is it, Napoleon?" I asked.

"A sheep," he whispered mysteriously. "We'll get it around midnight."

There was something irregular about the proposition and I recognized that fact immediately by the inflection in Sweeper's voice.

"Something smells," I observed.

"Sheep, no doubt," Andrew chimed in, turning up unexpectedly, as was his custom, particularly in Bronislava's kitchen. "They always do, you know."

"Sweeper," I said severely, "you do remember that the Command strictly forbade us to requisition food, don't you? The order specifies the only ones who have a right to carry out this sort of requisition: Quote, 'the representative of the Quartermaster or the Security Corps, if it is deemed that the supplies of food or any other articles of first need are found in excessive quantity in private

hands No army unit, no officer or soldier, is permitted to confiscate, requisition or otherwise take any private property whatsoever, under the penalty of court martial' Unquote. You do know this order, Sweeper, don't you?"

"They can go to hell with their stupid orders," Sweeper snorted "If I know where there is a surplus of food, if I know that my boys are hungry, if I know that they need every ounce of strength for what's ahead of them, then I know the right thing to do. And now let's go. And, by the way, Aneri, are you coming with us for the sheep?"

"Of course," I answered

Five of us went—Scholar, Sweeper, Andrew, Marek and I. We went up Topiel Street, among the dancing fires of the houses burning all around us. The street was littered with debris It was hardest to pass by No. 19, where a huge mound of wreckage from the house which once stood there now blocked the way. We had to climb over the pile to get through. I was almost on top of the mound when an explosion from within shot a fountain of bricks up into the air right near me and sent me rolling down the other side. I got up promptly. Except for some scratches and an ugly gash on my right thigh, I was unharmed. My coat was torn.

"You're lucky," Sweeper whistled. "That's how people usually find themselves minus a leg or a head, you know"

We passed a patrol from the power station.

"How are things?" Sweeper asked

"We're still there," was the answer "But they make it hot for us, all right. Right good hunting they're having"

"And you?" I asked.

"Barking back, as best we can. Too bad we can't do it like we know how. The four of us thought we could go for a little swim and blow up the Krauts on the river. But we haven't got anything except matches"

Thinking they must be referring to some new home-

made weapon when they spoke of matches, I inquired what it was.

"Matches," they said "Honest-to-goodness matches We found over a hundred cases of them when we seized the power station. That sure is one thing we have plenty of at our post."

"How long can you hold on?" Sweeper asked

"Well, it depends, of course Now if they just use machine guns and light caliber guns, we can stay a long time But if they keep up what they have been sending us these last days from the Poniatowski Bridge, there's not much we can do The heaviest cannon are over there If they keep that up," and the man waved his hand vaguely, "then we are dead ducks."

Sweeper led us to a closed gate At this mysterious place he stopped and, pressing his mouth against a small hole in the gate, he hissed the password. A swaying black shadow moved forward from the depths of the big courtyard

"Who's that?" a man's hoarse voice asked.

"Lieutenant Scoundrel," Sweeper replied

I burst out laughing but he nudged me to stop, and I put a hand over my mouth. The man threw the keys over the gate to us. Sweeper caught them nimbly and struggled with the rusty lock for a long while. At last it gave in and we walked into the court. The man led us to a cow shed and opened its door. Sweeper entered first. I followed right after him. The warm smell of the shed tickled my nostrils Sweeper lighted the interior with his small flashlight. I made out the lines of an enormous shadow, and heard it groan.

"You've got a cow here, too?" Sweeper asked casually

"She's with calf," the man answered. "She gives a bit of milk, and they are taking it every day for some child"

Sweeper mumbled something and turned away. We

could not take the cow. Then he turned toward a large and evil-smelling black sheep. I moved away and sat down on a pile of junk in the corner of the shed. The boys were arguing as to which one of them should butcher the sheep. None of them wanted to do it. To me it seemed ridiculous to be so squeamish about a sheep when every one of them was entitled to several notches on his gun for the number of Germans he had killed. Suddenly, a dead rooster fell in my lap.

"Hold on to it, will you?" came from Sweeper.

Finally they butchered the sheep. The small matter of signing a requisition receipt then came up. Sweeper was unperturbed. I watched over his shoulder as he was scrawling this note: "I have received one sheep for my unit. My boys are hungry and there is heavy fighting ahead of us." He signed it "Lieutenant Scoundrel of the Fools' Unit."

"A schoolboy's prank, Sweeper," I remarked disdainfully.

"What are you talking about?" He looked at me in innocent amazement. "It's all in order, isn't it?"

In the glow of the fires we returned to our post, bringing the butchered sheep with us.

Barbarka was on my mind. Even if no orders had been received so far to evacuate the civilians from our sector, I was anxious to send Barbarka off to the center of the city. I had tried to talk to her about it, but she would not hear of leaving me behind.

"When you go, I'll go, too, Mummy," she would say.

"But I cannot leave, Barbarka," I answered desperately.

"I know you cannot. Let's stay here, then."

But I could not let her stay with me any longer. Fire was devouring one house after another around us. It was a miracle that our house was still standing in spite of all the damage it had suffered. Though we went on breath-

ing and living somehow, we all knew that our days were numbered.

Reports reached us that streams of civilians and large units of the army were moving southward, blocking the available roads, waiting hours and even days at the barricade on Sikorski Avenue. Conditions were quieter in the south of Warsaw, and waiting at the "bloodiest barricade" on Sikorski Avenue did not seem as bad as crouching in cellars of crumbling houses in constant danger of being buried alive.

September 2nd came in clouds of smoke, and we were compelled to spend the greater part of the day in the shelters. Still the evacuation orders for the civilian population in our district had not been issued. Many of the cellars were half filled with earth and bricks. Now and then a stray shell would find its way even into a shelter. In our own basement such a shell was stalled in its course by a pile of sand put up against the window for protection.

About noon the German bombardment quieted down a little and I went out to see what was happening in God's good world. The sight was miserable, the Red Cross station even more so. Shell splinters were lodged in the furniture, and I tried to pull out a few pieces which were still hot. Then I packed some bandages and medicines in a hat box to take down to Zofia in the cellar. As far as one could see from here our position at the corner of Obozna Street was unchanged. I saw our soldiers lying in the garden, their guns in hand, and Nalecz standing by his "catapult." Two more boys, forming his crew, were lying alongside a row of small bottles of explosives, ready to be "fired." On the barricade there were eleven of our men. Two others stood in the gateway of No. 18 Topiel Street; that meant that our contact with Sergeant Putkowski's machine-gun nest beyond was still being maintained.

Lieutenant Pobog came down from Command 2/4, from Tamka Street I greeted him eagerly, hoping that he was bringing evacuation orders for civilians. But Pobog shook his head in the negative.

"There is no place in the entire city to which we could evacuate the civilians from here," he said. "All the roads to the center of the city are blocked by troop movements. Reinforcements are being sent to the Czerniakow sector, where the German attacks have grown violent. On Krakowskie Przedmiescie there is heavy fighting, too, right above the Holy Cross Church. The Germans brought their tanks into action there, herding before them as a shield the civilians they had rounded up in Bednarska Street."

I went to the cellar where Zofia was resting on her mattress. She had not noticed my approach. Her eyes were wide open, and quiet tears were streaming down her face. Except for these tears, there were no traces of emotion or despair on her face. As soon as she became aware of my arrival, she sat up and fumbled for her shoes.

"Are there any new wounded?" she asked.

"No. But there is bad news. We'll either have to withdraw from here or else..."

"Well, I'm not going anywhere," Zofia said steadily. "My mother is old and ill; she cannot walk, and I cannot possibly leave her alone."

"What do you plan to do then? You surely could not let your mother go to Pruszkow Camp. She would never survive there. And if you remain here when it's all over, you will both fall into German hands."

Zofia was silent for a long minute. Then she looked around the crowded cellar, which resembled a red-brick tomb. A few tiny candles were burning in some corners. Beyond their small flames, the cellar was a mass of dark shadows of people littering the floor.

Zofia looked at the inhabitants of the stuffy cellar. Then

she turned to me, and I saw she had tears in her eyes again.

"And these?" she asked "What'll happen to them?"

I did not know what to answer. Of what avail was it to curse the silence across the Vistula, the silence of Soviet guns and planes? Fury had long since given way to despair.

A woman crawled over to Zofia's mattress, and with anguished eyes searched her face.

"It's the little one," she said "Won't you look at her? She moans in her sleep so badly."

On the 7th of August that woman had given birth to twins. One child had died shortly afterwards. The other still lived. The woman's husband was away with the Home Army, fighting in some other sector. She had had no news from him, but she was very brave and never before had I heard her complain about anything. Her face now showed the utmost strain and exhaustion. It was clear that she could not hold out much longer.

The baby was not ill. She had no temperature.

"Why don't you take the little one and go to the Felician Sisters at Drowniana Street?" I suggested.

The woman looked at me, horrified.

"To the Felician Sisters?" she repeated "But their building has been badly damaged by bombs. It won't last long under further bombardment."

"And this house here?" I asked, trying not to sound panicky.

"I guess you're right," answered the woman, dropping her head. "I'll go."

We took her to Drowniana Street, carrying her baby and her suitcases. Zofia, who was in the good graces of the nuns, led the way, for every morning at five-thirty she went to their chapel to attend Holy Mass. They looked a bit askance at me, because they had never seen me with Zofia, but my record with the good nuns was

also not entirely black, for I had twice carried a package from the Sister Superior to her nephew in the southern part of the city during my trips there.

We waited in the hall while a young nun went for the Sister Superior. The baby wailed loudly, and the mother gave it her breast. The wailing ceased immediately.

The Sister Superior welcomed us cordially.

"It's very crowded here, very crowded. But we'll manage somehow, won't we?" She smiled at the tiny infant noisily sucking at her mother's breast. "If you have any other people you would like to send to us, just bring them over. We'll manage."

Five more times Zofia and I climbed through the runs of No. 19, and plowed through the littered streets, bringing other totally helpless cases over and commending them to the loving care of the Felician Sisters.

Two more things had to be done that day. The dressing station had to be transferred from my ex-tobacco store to the cellar, and I had to make up a bundle for Barbarka before sending her away.

There were nine beds in the cellar of our house where I had decided to set up the dressing station. I had to awaken the occupants and tell them to find new quarters in the laundry and in another cellar near by as we needed the room for expected casualties. They left the cellar one by one, some taking their bundles with them, others leaving them stowed under the beds. No one grumbled or uttered a bitter word.

I arranged the cots so that it would be easy to reach all of them. I put two tables, one large and one small, against the wall, and another behind the big chimney, in a place I considered safest, all our sanitary supplies I laid out on this third table. Then I prepared my own kit and checked its contents carefully. Looking around the new dressing station, I sighed with satisfaction. It was much

better down here than above, much safer now. Also, this was our last ditch. Here we will remain, too . . . unless, well, unless they ordered us to retreat, but that seemed unlikely.

To pack Barbarka's things was not easy. I made a roll of two light blankets into which I had put a dress, some underthings, a couple of towels and handkerchiefs. I was aware that this was a fateful moment, and my heart pounded, but my eyes were dry. Tears are such a nuisance when one has to worry about so many details. Warm underclothes? . . . Yes, she will need them. A coat, too, and money. All I had in currency was the small sum of five hundred zlotys. The rest of my funds had been invested in cigarettes, and my whole stock had long since been smoked away by the boys. And yet the child had to have some money with her. There was my jewelry, but I rejected the thought instantly. If the Germans caught her with a jewelry box, they would beat her mercilessly. My mind traveled to the American ten-dollar gold piece that I owned. Just before the outbreak of the Uprising this was worth about fourteen thousand zlotys. But to give Barbarka the gold in foreign coins would be even more dangerous than jewelry. In a way, it would also prove harder to dispose of, in view of the severe penalties the Germans imposed for the crime of either possessing or dealing in foreign currency. As I was pulling tight the straps on her bundle I decided to give Barbarka a ring and all the zlotys I had. As for my small box of jewelry, I hid it behind a loose brick in the chimney.

"Aneril! Aneril!" someone shouted from upstairs.

"What is it?"

"Sweeper is calling you."

"All right. Coming. Just a second."

I brushed my overalls and wiped the black coal dust from my face. I found Sweeper in his room, at the post. His knitted brows bespoke worry.

"The situation is anything but funny," he said matter-of-factly. "They promised to send us two more Piats, picked up after the last Allied planes flew over mid-city. They also promised quite a lot of ammunition and some German hand grenades. We are to have as many as three hundred men all around here, in this line of defense. Pobog told me the reinforcements they are sending here are not too tired."

I listened, without asking any questions. We had known it was coming ever since August 31st, when we had begun to evacuate the Old Town. No one expected Soviet help any more. We knew now that it would never come, and we dismissed all false hopes from our minds.

"Is that all, Sweeper?"

"Well, no. There's one more thing I wanted to tell you, Aneri. Don't leave the post for the next few days, no matter whether they need you or not at those other places. You will be needed here most of all."

"Yes, sir."

"Have a drink?" Sweeper's voice was no longer formal.

"What do you have?"

"Good vodka. Cooled. It has been buried in the cellar."

"All right. Pour it out."

We drained our glasses in silence. Then, as I was about to leave, Sweeper remembered one more thing.

"By the way, Aneri," he said, "if you want to make a round of your posts today, why, I think you can still do it. But don't dawdle while you're at it."

What I saw on my last round that day was ominous. There used to be five nurses assigned to the Tamka post, housed in a once-beautiful apartment building. I arrived there to find a huge hole in the wall and only two girls busy retrieving from the debris dressings, hypodermic needles and small bottles of medical supplies, all of them, unfortunately, broken. The two girls at the post, Yoanna and Marguerite, were both seventeen-year-olds, and I saw

right away that Yoanna had been wounded in her left arm

"What happened?" I asked. "Are you going to move pianos through that wall? Did the Germans attack the post?"

"No, it was a cannon shell from the Vistula "

"And the other girls? Where are the other three?"

"Two are with the Ursuline Sisters, in the hospital."

"Wounded? Badly?"

"Well, rather But not critically, thank God "

"And the third one?"

"Halinka went home today, on a two-hour pass, to see her mother who is sick She . . . They killed her as she was crossing the street."

Halinka, too, was seventeen, I thought, and already she was dead. Only two youngsters were now left to hold the post and care for dozens of wounded. And one of the two was wounded herself.

It was difficult to return to the station after my round had been completed I tried to dodge the shells and their fragments. Then I saw German planes coming over again, and ran back to the post. Running, I calculated that my house was the fifth from Tamka Street, and perhaps they would bomb them in order. Three bombs fell on our street just then: one in the courtyard of No 18, the second, on the ruins of what had been No. 16, the third, right near our Red Cross station, whose door was blown off its hinges. Fortunately, as far as I could see, there were no losses in human lives.

At the station Madame Bronislava besieged Sweeper and me with pleas for some food for our field kitchen. Her entreaties, alas, were all too familiar to us.

"Why must you pester a decent man's life?" Sweeper put his hands up to his ears, protesting that he wanted to hear no more about it "I can't come down here from the

post for one moment without your heckling the life out of me. You got a sheep yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yes," Madame Bronislava said meekly.

"Did the boys get it, too?"

"They've already eaten it all. Only some bones are left."

"Well, what more do you want?" At this point he ran out of argument and looked at me appealingly for assistance.

"After such a luxurious meal," I rushed to his help, "the human organism should relax a bit, you know. Give them plenty of coffee, it will be good for... hm." Here I got stuck, too. I knew that Madame Bronislava still had fairly large supplies of *Enrilo*, the ersatz coffee we had been drinking. But I could see that she seemed skeptical about my suggestions. Taking quick stock of her vegetable situation, she sighed and announced "I'll make a red beet soup with those bones for tomorrow, I guess. But that is really all we have."

"Well, you see, once you put your mind to something it always works out in the end," Sweeper sent her away in his most ingratiating fashion. "I knew you could solve the problem without me."

"Horses! Horses!" I heard shouts soon afterwards from the other side of Topiel Street, closer to the University grounds. There was a rush in that direction.

No one knew where they had come from, but when I saw the horses, crazed with fear, rearing, stamping and snorting in the vegetable gardens, not far from the University wall, all I could think of was: meat. These must have been German horses, perhaps runaways from Police Headquarters, for we had none. They were well fed and well kept.

One shot was fired, and a bay horse fell heavily, his spurting blood throwing the others into a panic. Sweeper was at the back door of his post, field glasses in hand.

Rola, with a gun, stood close to him. It was Rola who had shot the horse.

"We'll have to wait for nightfall to get him," Sweeper said.

"But we can't," Rola protested. "The Germans will be waiting for the night, too. We must get that horse now."

"But the Germans saw you shoot it, Rola. Don't be a fool! They are just getting ready for you to come out there for that carcass."

"Give me two boys. We'll make it, all right."

"As you wish. Take any two. I'll keep you well covered myself," Sweeper shrugged his shoulders.

Bursting with the good news and with the excitement of the hunt, I ran down to the cellar to tell Zofia all about it. She was preparing dressings, quietly and unassumingly as usual. The dressings, she knew, might be needed any moment. Zofia never forgot that.

I dashed back to watch Rola and the other two boys crawl up the undefended slope to secure the horse meat. If the Germans noticed them, all of Sweeper's protection would prove useless. They were sure to get killed. I clenched my fists hard, so hard that I felt my rough nails cut deep into my palm. With smarting eyes I watched them crawling up and up, cautiously, sinuously, yet quickly. Good Lord—they were there already! Now I could see their heads above the high grass. And now they had to tie ropes around the horse's roofs, and do it firmly so they would not break or slide off during the hasty retreat. They began to drag it, slowly at first, then a little quicker, down the slope! German shots rang out in a volley. The dead horse swayed on its side, then slid down abruptly. There was silence and quiet for a while. No one moved. I could not see Rola or either of the boys, but by and by I saw the carcass being moved again. New shots from the German-held University followed in its

trail But the horse glided on and on, until the boys were within the last few yards of safety, until they crouched finally in the protecting shadow of the janitor's small house

Rola wiped the sweat off his face.

"We were . . . damn lucky," he stammered happily.

The other two boys dragged the horse still farther, to the small garden behind the Red Cross station Sweeper slapped Rola on the back resoundingly The other boys at the post raised their guns in both hands above their heads, and executed a wild dance around a kitchen stool

"Wait till I tell Madame Bronislava," Sweeper winked at me. I trailed behind as he smoothed out his uniform Putting on a benevolent expression, he finally strutted down to the field kitchen.

"You got a sheep yesterday, madame?" he asked politely

Bronislava's dark eyes scanned his face carefully. She obviously knew nothing of the horse and, anticipating some teasing, she shrugged her shoulders

"So what?" she said tartly. "It's all gone, as I told you"

"Tomorrow, if you please, you'll serve the boys nice, juicy steaks," Sweeper ordered.

Bronislava waved the kitchen smoke away from her face and looked at Sweeper as if he were mad. Then she turned to me, but she did not derive any moral support from my beaming countenance We could not stand the suspense any longer. I grabbed Bronislava's left hand, Sweeper took her by the right, and we dragged her outside.

"A horse!" she screamed. "Oh, my dearest! A whole horse!" and she burst out crying.

That evening I took Barbarka to spend the night in the bathroom, which seemed the safest place in the whole house. I spread a thin mattress and a blanket on the floor

between the wall and the bathtub, and, to give her courage, brought Kaytek, our cat, to keep her company. Then I sewed up in the seams of my warm dress, which I kept handy for an emergency that might require a quick change back to civilian clothes, the ten-dollar gold piece once brought "for good luck" from a trip abroad.

Around midnight small groups of soldiers and liaison girls passed through the station on the way to their assigned posts. Every group would tarry long enough to say good-bye.

"At least for twenty-four hours," Myszka said.

"More probably forever," a man's voice corrected.

"You're always crowing like a raven. What's the matter with you, anyway, Yanek?"

"I'd rather give it to them than take it."

"Anyone telling you not to?"

"I mean: attack. I hate waiting for them to come and get us. It's always better to spring at their throats when least expected. You can kill a man stronger than yourself that way."

"Well, there's no use talking about it now. We got our orders. Good-bye, Aneri."

"Good luck. God be with you."

Finally, they had all passed into the night, and darkness closed behind their noiseless steps the way water closes after a diver. It was a hostile darkness, and I shivered when I saw a squat silhouette groping across the torn-up threshold and the debris of the broken door.

"Who's there?" I called sharply.

"The tower," a man's voice answered with the password of the day, and I relaxed. "Aneri?" the man asked.

"Come in," I said curtly, motioning him across the pile of ruins.

"I have a letter for you from Colonel Matylda," he said, handing me a folded sheet of paper. I sat down on the floor and, by the small light of a tiny candle, which went

under the name of "sabbath-candle," began to read Matylda's small, orderly handwriting

"Dear Lieutenant, my very dear Aneri! I trust that everything is still well in your sector and at your post. Here it seems as if all the cannon men had ever built on this good earth were roaring. But that matters nought. Tell Mrs Yadviga Z that her daughter Magda has been slightly wounded. She is all right, though, and is now with her father.

"Hold on, my dear. You know, it's incredible, but I still find myself believing.

"An order has been issued permitting a change to civilian clothes should you find yourselves in a hopeless situation. Then, go back into the Underground.

"Powisle must follow the Old Town. There is no other way, I'm afraid. In the last moment we will probably change our quarters, too. Keep well and wear nicely your Cross of Valor." With her signature went her full military rank in the Home Army.

Beneath these half-cheering, half-hopeless words there was a postscript scribbled in a very fine hand. I had to bring it very close to my eyes to read:

"My daughter died in action this morning. She joined her husband. They gave her the *Virtuti Militari*." (Our highest order.)

I looked for more. Not a tear had blotted the letter. There was not another word about the deaths of her daughter or her son-in-law, or the six-year-old son they had left behind. Such was Colonel Matylda.

EVERYTHING WAS quiet and serene in the hour before dawn, but down in the shelters people were already awaking. The seepage of water in the cellars had made their habitation increasingly unbearable. It flowed down from Tamka Street and streamed out of the ruins of the house at No. 19 Topiel Street. Some tried to pump the water out or to bail it out with buckets, but finally they gave up. Planks were then knocked together into primitive rafts. Jumping from raft to raft, one could go from one end of a cellar to the other, and move from shelter to shelter.

I had never imagined that human beings could be as wretched as the civilians in Warsaw in this second month of the Uprising. The faces of the women were dreadful to look at, and the children were sickly and hungry. Many cried all the time. Others played in the filthy water flooding their shelters.

At night the post changed from a front-line position into a munitions factory. I now found the boys admiring their latest handiwork: a row of brand-new hand grenades, fashioned out of black stockings. I had seen them at work, sitting in a circle, carefully measuring the amount of explosive to be poured into limp stockings or making peculiar pins for these grenades. Others would pour the explosive mixture into bottles and cork them, while their comrades would attach the fuses.

Sweeper had been wounded slightly in the leg while on the observation post. Stefan, the lookout, was also wounded. He was the second observer within a week to be knocked out. I took Stefan down to the dressing station. He cursed loudly and minced no words in ex-

pressing his feelings about the Germans. His main resentment seemed to be against the fact that the Germans were decimating our ranks when we needed men so badly. Zofia dressed his wound and I offered to help him to the hospital. But the boy protested vehemently.

'I'll go by myself. What do you take me for? A sissy?'

He staggered, and I steadied him with my arm just in time. I went with him up Topiel Street and across the pile of debris at No. 19. He held out for a couple of blocks. At Cicha Street he fainted. I ran to fetch some help. At Command 2/4 they gave me a man and a stretcher. They had their hands full themselves, for a shell had just burst in their quarters, wounding three men and causing serious damage.

We left Stefan at the hospital. On the way back, a new explosion flung us down, and I woke up partly buried in a pile of sand that had been dug out an hour or so before for a grave. Next to me lay five mangled bodies of civilians who had been killed on Copernicus Street and were here awaiting burial. A soldier helped me up.

"What's your hurry, sister? Not yet," he warned, eyeing meaningfully the fresh grave.

The soldier assigned to me from Command 2/4 sat a few steps away, rubbing his head with one hand, holding onto the stretcher with the other. The stretcher was not destroyed, thank God. I thought that the man's injuries and my own bad bruises were not as important as the fact that the stretcher was still good. We had so few stretchers. Or was it that we had so many wounded?

Together with my companion I returned to Command 2/4. The three wounded men there had already been removed to the hospital on Smulikowski Street. Holding tight his throbbing temples and squinting with his tired eyes, Lieutenant Pobog told me there was so much butchered human flesh at that hospital that there was not enough room even on the floors in the wards and

corridors for the incoming casualties and that people had to be laid on top of one another awaiting their turns

"Lieutenant Pobog, please, give orders for the civilians to leave," I begged him. "They can't stay here. It's a slaughterhouse. They don't have to die. They are not in the Home Army, after all."

Pobog passed his hand over his forehead in a weary, desperate gesture. It was particularly poignant coming from such a quiet, unhurried person as Pobog.

"I can't issue evacuation orders, Aneri," he answered. "But you can tell people to leave, you can advise them privately to do so. For that you have my blessing. People have confidence in you, you know. They might follow your advice."

This untied my hands. I started on a pilgrimage from one cellar to another to tell people to leave, to go to the south of Warsaw, anywhere but here. I began with No. 9 Zajecza Street, where Irena lived, that same Irena who had been married to a Jew and suffered five long years of agony for it. She deserved a break. But she looked at me incredulously when I poured forth my good advice.

"You really advise me to leave everything behind? To start once more for some unknown destination? I have no strength left to lose everything for the third time in this war. Don't coax me, Aneri. I won't move from this place, even if I am going to perish here."

Everywhere I went with my advice, people looked at me horrified and refused to leave their abodes. Instead of helping the miserable folks, I was making them realize the utter hopelessness of their situation.

"I don't care any more," an ashen-faced woman, with all life drained out of her, told me. "I can't go on this way. Let it come, whatever it be, but let it end quickly."

A sudden burst of particularly violent fire caught me at the corner of Drowniana and Topiel Streets. I

crouched close to a wall, waiting for the fire to quiet down. I could see shells striking my house and tearing down the walls of our former Red Cross station. The immaculate flag Mrs. Anleg had sewn for us from the two British parachutes was still flying over the ruins.

Then planes appeared. I hugged the bricks strewn on the street, and buried my head in my arms. My eyes were glued to the planes. "Good Lord," I prayed, "Barbarka is in the house." They circled a few times, and then dived down. For a fraction of a second I closed my eyes, unable to stand the suspense. Quickly I looked again. A shower of white leaflets filled the air, gleaming in the sun. From all sides people emerged to pick them up.

"ULTIMATUM!!!" read the screaming headline in heavy type over the small leaflet. "The Old Town has surrendered. The Germans are not waging war on civilians. Display your good judgment and sound reason, and surrender. Have no illusions: *You will not get any help.* You are betrayed, as you've been betrayed before. Leave your houses. Go westward. The Germans will receive you well, give you bread and work, and assure you of good care. If you reject this offer now, the Germans will wait no more and will proceed to destroy both the city and the population. No one will be saved."

The leaflet was signed by the "Polish Committee to Help the Refugees," and it bore the round seal of the Polish Red Cross.

It was not the first time that the Germans had dropped on us leaflets calling for surrender, couched in terms either of entreaties or threats, and allegedly signed by some Polish organization. Ever since the first days of the Uprising when they had broadcast a counterfeit order of General Bor, they tempted our exhausted and despairing people with the clean beds and good food at the Pruszków Camp. The latest ultimatum of September 3rd was received by everybody with a shrug of the shoulders.

We did not have to wait long for the bombers. They came one hour after the leaflets, and turned a number of houses on Zajecza, Leszczynska and Dobra Streets upside down, as if they had been paper boxes.

I continued my rounds of the cellars. Instead of advising, I pleaded with and begged civilians to leave. But they were still reluctant.

Mrs Kempfi, the sweet Mrs Kempfi, who used to sneak into the station bringing some tea or some good syrup for the boys, who had once brought me as a special gift a plateful of delicious salad with real mayonnaise, now came up to me

"And what are you going to do, Aneri?" she asked.

"The Army orders are to stay here."

She made a gesture of protest. I hastened to repeat: "You must leave and take your two girls with you, Mrs. Kempfi. You must go. Please go at once."

"But you are staying behind," she argued. And she looked at me—it was hard to believe—with a smile. "I'll stay, too," she announced. "Perhaps we can still be of help, I or my children."

I burst out crying and, after kissing her on the cheek, made a dash for the next house.

In the cellar of No. 23, I at last found some women who had decided to leave with their children. They asked us to guide them to the center of the city. Three of us went with them: Barbara W., the young nurse who had taken the place of the wounded Aniela, a soldier and myself. The women wept on the way out. Unmindful of the bullets and shells whizzing by, they looked back upon our wrecked block as if they were leaving someone dear behind at an eternal resting place.

One of the women had been a teacher in a public school before the war. Her small boy, Ruchard, who was with her, was crying. The woman shook him by the shoulder rather sharply. She looked back and made her

son look, too, at the ruins and flames they were leaving behind.

"Look and remember, Richard," she admonished him through clenched teeth. Her eyes were ablaze with hate, her mouth distorted from pain. "Look and remember, my son. One day you will take vengeance for all this"

The three of us were on the way back from the barricade at Nowy Swiat Street, where we had delivered the group of women and children, when an explosion threw us to the ground. After we had pulled ourselves together, we found that both Barbara W. and I had come off easily, with scratches and bruises only. But the soldier who had accompanied us was dead. He had been torn in half by the blast.

Barbara W. remained at Command 2/4. I returned to our post. I found Zofia at the station, at work, as usual. She was dressing the foot of a middle-aged, dumpy woman, who had been hit by a flying brick. The woman was not badly hurt, but she had been suffering from an acute stomach ailment for several weeks, and this was the last straw. She sat on the stool, with Zofia kneeling at her feet, and rocked back and forth monotonously, wailing and whimpering. "Oh, dear Jesus, why did you let me live so long? You must loathe me not to let me die."

During a riotous performance of German cannon and bombers, a courier from Dobra Street came to our post. He reported that hand-to-hand fighting was going on there, that our men were badly in need of relief and that they had no nurses.

"What do you mean 'no nurses'?" I asked. "You have four of them at that post, and I saw them at work myself only yesterday."

"We had four," the messenger corrected me. "Now we have only one left, and she is wounded, too."

"Jesus! Maria! What happened?"

"Two of them were badly wounded. We took them to the hospital on Smulikowski Street. In all probability they won't come out of it alive. One lies in our courtyard. We have had no time to bury her yet. The fourth one, I told you, is still on duty, but she is wounded, too."

The man was telling me all this in a quiet voice, without a trace of pathos. He was covered with blood, but did not seem to pay any attention to it. Some people acquire immunity to pain after their souls become saturated with suffering.

"Are you wounded?" I asked.

The man shrugged his shoulders, and answered indifferently: "I don't know. Nothing seems to hurt me, though. You may look if you wish."

I wiped the blood and the grime off him and examined him cautiously. But the man was not wounded. The blood was not his. He was only dead tired. He had not slept for thirty hours, had not lain down to rest in all that time. His hands were swollen from hurling bottles of explosives at German tanks.

"I destroyed two of them," he said. But his voice was still colorless, even when he spoke of his hard-won victory.

A dozen boys with one British Piat and four nurses—three from Command 2/4 and myself—went to relieve our post at Dobra Street. It had been attacked from more than one side by German infantry. They came close but dared not venture, for fear of mines, beyond the magic circle of the flat cans strewn in the street. This saved the post at Dobra Street, for the day at least. The barricade there was strong and well built. But the boys had no more strength left and were dropping from sheer exhaustion. Two of them were severely wounded, and we took them to the hospital immediately. We had long ceased paying any attention to slight wounds requiring a hasty dressing. I left the three nurses and the relief unit with

the Piat at Dobra Street, and went back to Sweeper's post.

I timed my return perfectly. A shell had exploded in the hallway, a couple of feet beyond the threshold, and set the post afire. Other shells followed on the heels of the first. Through a shower of plaster, bricks and big splinters of wood from smashed window frames and doors, I saw a few men and Zofia trying to quell the flames with some heavy toweling and blankets.

They smothered the fire. All broken up, I sank on the stairs in the vestibule. Zofia came to me and embraced me softly. She whispered words of endearment and encouragement into my ears. I looked up at her with envy, almost with resentment, that she should still be so collected, so brave and so calm, when I was on the point of breaking down. But she thought it was perfectly natural for her to lead me downstairs, to the cellar, and usher me toward a bed. Heavily I sat down on the bed, and landed on a pair of feet. A woman was sound asleep in the midst of all that hell raging above us.

"Aneril!" It was Sweeper's voice calling.

"Coming," I responded unenthusiastically. "What is it, Sweeper? New wounded?"

"No. New orders."

He told me what I had already learned from Colonel Matylda's letter, that we were to defend the post to the last and, when forced to leave, we were to do so in civilian clothes.

"You are a blockhead, if I ever saw one," I snapped irritably. "Think of dragging me upstairs for an order I knew already!"

Sweeper looked contrite and I felt ashamed of myself, not the first and not the last time in those days.

Our post at that moment was held by some sixty boys. The promised reinforcements of three hundred men, with Piat and ammunition, had so far failed to materialize. I

studied our sentries and looked at those resting in the cellars, and arrived in my mind at the great decision. The furious shelling ceased by five o'clock in the afternoon, and I knew suddenly that this was the last hour, that I could wait no longer Barbarka had to leave the post.

I dressed the child in a warm dress and had her put on her green woolen coat. It was still good, though it was eight years old and had been altered many times. I cried as I collected her things with trembling hands, all the while begging Barbarka not to cry.

"Here, take my fur coat with you, too," I said.

Barbarka protested tearfully.

"You have no warm coat, Barbarka. Take it!" I urged.

"And how about you, Mummy?"

"Well, precisely. It's for me, you'll keep it for me until I come for you, darling."

She threw her arms around my neck and I kissed her blindly, squeezing a tiny silver Madonna into her hand. I was completely baffled. Could it be that our lives had to part? But I had no life other than Barbarka's. We shared it between the two of us. And it was like seeing half of one's life go away with a small bundle in its hand.

Pan Yanek was to take Barbarka to the center of the city, to Skorupki Street. From the vestibule I saw them run across to No. 18 and disappear in the net of underground passages which would take them to Tamka Street the safer way. Barbarka's bare legs in brown shoes flashed in the sunshine. When she reached the other side of the courtyard, her round face turned once more toward me. Then, the huge rucksack of the man accompanying her blotted her out of my sight.

I remained standing limply, thinking of Barbarka. I recalled when she had been so frightfully sick that for weeks she hovered between life and death, and was saved by a miracle. There was the time when we had looked

with eyes aglow into a window filled with dream-dolls priced exorbitantly for my purse, and tiny Barbarka, swallowing hard, had squeezed my hand and observed "Isn't it foolish, Mummy, to buy such expensive dolls for children?" Then there was the occasion some time before the Uprising when two seemingly innocuous loaves of bread, with two grenades concealed in each, had been delivered to her with orders to carry them to a certain address. I remembered the moment when I followed Barbarka numbly as she was returning from one of her secret girl scout assignments and saw her escape by a hair's breadth a manhunt in the street. August 1st flashed through my mind, when, a few hours before the Uprising, she had informed me that she, too, would have to go. Finally, could I ever forget the time I returned to the station to find her washing off Yanosik's fresh blood with her own tears. . . . And now Barbarka was gone. I was sure I would never see her again, though I had promised her I would come. I was sure I would die right where I was, in the dirt and the stench, and be buried under a heap of rubble.

Zofia found me standing there, and gently wiped off my tears. She laid a warm hand on my shoulder and in an even, reassuring tone told me how prudent it had been of me to send Barbarka off to Skorupki Street. It was a small, blind street, and no one would have reason to invade it.

There was a piercing screech, and we both fell. Blood oozed out of my mouth. My ears were deafened by that hateful constant roar. Both of us must have been shouting, because I saw Zofia's mouth wide open and remembered my own efforts to scream for help. Scholar, Sweeper, Marek and Rola came running to us. Zofia stood up with their aid and pointed upward where the roof had been. She was shaking her head, while a red ribbon of blood streamed down from her left ear. I saw her lips move, but I could not hear anything at all. I was

still disgorging blood. I could not move either my arms or my legs. They carried me to the bathroom and laid me on the mattress where Barbarka had slept the last few nights. Kaytek was still there, and he jumped on my pillow, miauling and sniffing at my bloody mouth. They put some compresses on my head. Scholar tried to talk to me, but I could not hear him. I closed my eyes, and the excitement faded away immediately. The German cannon fire no longer existed for me. Had they taken the post at that moment, I would not have cared. The sweet-sour taste in my mouth was the only sensation I felt. I tried to stroke Kaytek's soft fur, but could not raise my hand. So I just lay there. . . .

Someone was leaning over me and touching my forehead softly. I opened my eyes and tried to focus them. Gently I moved my hand. I could do it now. I rubbed my eyes then. The same face was leaning over me: Pan Yanek. But how was it possible? He had left with Barbarka an hour or so ago to take her safely to Skorupki Street. How could he be here? I thought of asking, Where is Barbarka?

Pan Yanek bent down still lower. He began to speak, and, incredibly, I could hear him.

"I came back especially," he said, "to tell you that Barbarka got safely across to Skorupki Street, and it did seem much quieter there than here. She is safe now."

I looked at Pan Yanek to see whether he had stopped speaking or whether I had ceased hearing again. But his lips did not move. Then I made a new effort to speak. I caught his hand.

"Yanek, swear that you are telling the truth, swear that you left her in a safe place," I demanded feverishly.

Pan Yanek raised his right hand. "I swear," he said gravely, and I fell back on my pillow. The world around me came back to me now. I shivered.

"What time is it?" I asked. "You came back so quickly."

Pan Yanek glanced at his watch. Then he shook his head: "Not so quickly at that," he said "It's midnight"

Midnight! So many hours flat on my back It certainly was high time for me to get up and go back to work I moved on my mattress Yanek's big hand pinned me down again

"Relax a bit," he said. "And I'll tell you about Barbarka."

With my eyes half-closed I listened to a detailed account of their journey through the tunnels and the barricades, and how Barbarka was not afraid to pass even the "bloody barricade" on Sikorski Avenue

"She asked me to tell you," Yanek ended gently, "that she will not be afraid and she'll wait for you"

Carefully, stiffly, I put my feet on the floor and hoisted myself up. It was one o'clock in the morning. A new day of dying was beginning for us.

TWO PIATS, and the two men carrying them, arrived to reinforce our positions before the coming onslaught. Our boys, with their guns and grenades, had been lying in wait for hours, ready for the German infantry attack which was expected any minute now. The dead quiet of the post was as ominous as the dark hush that falls before a storm.

Sweeper sat on a stool in the courtyard, his head in his hands, and dozed whenever he got a chance. With some effort he pulled himself together when he saw me approaching.

"How is your head?" he said, pointing to the wet rag in which I was still bandaged.

"So-so How's your leg?"

"Fairly well Could be worse. Say, I hear you have been awarded the Cross of Valor, Aneri It was published in today's order of the day Congratulations."

Before I had time to answer, the German fire opened up with redoubled violence.

"God, but they are close!" Sweeper exclaimed.

We listened, and suddenly I saw on Sweeper's face the same perplexity that was rising in my mind. The fire was coming from the direction of Cicha Street. But Cicha? Impossible! Why, we had our units there.

"We must be encircled," Sweeper concluded. He sent some boys to reconnoiter the situation.

I went down and quickly changed to my civilian dress. It was warm and uncomfortable. Over the dress I slipped the white nurse's uniform and the Home Army armband, and suspended my first-aid kit from my shoulder. In the cellars people now began to worry for their lives. I ad-

vised them to move on even at that late hour. Some of them did, but they did not get very far.

I lay down next to our soldiers, who were tense in their watchfulness. The Germans were advancing cautiously, a few at a time, trying to feel out our strength. Our pillbox, held by Andrew and Scholar and a few others, kept quiet. They let the enemy come very close, then they killed them. Sergeant Putkowski's machine-gun nest from Leszczynska Street kept quiet, too.

The stars were still shining in the sky, but the night was tinged with the light of the approaching dawn. We could see the Germans in the ruins of the houses on Obozna Street. During a lull, we could hear their hobnailed boots ring in the night. They were getting ready, too. From our side no sound could reach their ears. The boys lay motionless on the ground, forming dark patches that seemed like graves in the night. The Germans continued to shell us, but no planes had come over as yet, probably because of the darkness.

With a wounded soldier, I went down to the cellar again. It began to look like an insane asylum. Eyes crazed with fear surrounded me. The strain of waiting for death, so much harder than dying itself, was telling on the people.

One elderly man was dragging a heavy trunk toward 25 Topiel Street. Another, tying the ends of a white sheet into a sizable bundle, approached him.

"What are you taking all that for?"

"If I must go, why not at least try to save some of my things?"

"And where are you going?"

"What do you mean 'where'? Anywhere, where I can find a quieter hole to dig in. They say that the Germans are already nestling in those burnt-out houses over there, across the street."

"What? Already there?" The man with the bundle threw

it on the floor and began to untie the sheets ends "Well, in that case, I won't go away. I'll stay right here. Perhaps I can be of help, too. Damn them and their children!" he cursed viciously. Some lace and shirts and shoes dropped out of the bundle. The man stooped to fish out of the pile a small silver spoon. He wiped it off with his coat's sleeve, and stared at it for a long time.

"It's my little girl's," he whispered, addressing no one in particular. "When she was a baby . . . Two years ago they took her to Majdanek . . . I don't know what's become . . ." He could not finish, overcome by the thought of Camp Majdanek, that most gruesome of all German slaughterhouses. I bent down to help him

"Aneri!" It was Scholar calling me

"Yes?" I shouted back, climbing up the stairs

"Come here Help me patch up the wall in the pillbox They just tore it down, the vermin"

We put up the bricks in three rows, one on top of the other, working quickly, doggedly. The wall began to rise again Zofia came to help, too.

"Aneri," she said timidly, "will they send us any other nurses, do you think? Suppose something happens to either of us It would be bad"

Zofia spoke quietly as usual, but I wondered for a moment whether she was afraid Then I looked at her and saw that there was nothing panicky about her She was afraid only that there might be no nurses left to take care of the wounded.

The breach in the wall was almost mended when panic seized the crowd of civilians. It came suddenly Women, frantic with fear for their children, led the tightly packed mob out of the cellars, seeking Sweeper and crying.

"Where is the commandant of the post?"

"You cannot let us be butchered here!"

"The children! Do something about the children!"

Then, a frenzied voice choking with tears screamed-

"The white flag! Let us hang out the white flag and surrender! Perhaps they won't kill us all!"

"Quiet!" thundered Sweeper. "Whoever wants to leave can still do so through the passage breached at No. 16. You can go to Drewniana Street and then through the convent's garden. The Germans are not attacking from that direction. You can make your way to the center of the city. But let there be no talk about white flags or surrender. The Home Army cannot surrender. Remember that. Leave, if you want. Calm your children, and you can do that best by calming yourselves. No hysteria now, remember. And, above all, no white flags!"

The speech had an effect. The women began to leave. Some had, previously, decided to go to Drewniana Street and on to the mid-city.

The dawn came in a vulgar pink, as if bathed in too strong a tincture. The substantial reinforcements we had been expecting had still failed to appear. The German shells flew over our post now, traveling too far. They would shortly correct their aim, no doubt. We could see the enemy soldiers in the gaping holes of the ruins across from our positions, and they could see us. Both sides tried to take cover. We knew they were many. They were not quite sure of our numbers.

"I sent Nalecz to Command 2/4 for some more men and nurses," Sweeper announced. "My boys are exhausted."

"And where are the girls, Danuta and Grazyna?"

"They're out on missions, too."

A well-aimed German shell again tore down the wall we had so laboriously erected not long before to protect our precious machine gun.

"Andrew!" I heard Scholar's voice and flew toward the pillbox. Andrew lay on the ground, unconscious, but, fortunately, not wounded. He came to very quickly and got up, brushing off his overalls.

"They can't find themselves another place, damn them," he muttered. "Hey, look! I'm soaked," he called in surprise.

My clothes were wet, too. The shell had struck the barrel of water standing at the post, and splashed it all over us.

"Go down and relax, now that you've been baptized," Scholar gave Andrew some fatherly advice. "We'll manage without you for the time being."

A small boy was scurrying around the post, touching the guns reverently, bringing up cases of ammunition and helping everybody. His clothes were tattered. He wore a red-and-white armband, also in tatters.

"Hello, citizen! And where did you come from?" I asked him.

"From Radom," he answered promptly.

"Dear Lord! I didn't mean your home town, but the unit you came from. Who sent you here?"

"I came by myself. I've been in the Home Army since August 3rd. I've been everywhere. I worked with Lieutenant Viktor on Dobra Street, too. And then I lived in that house on Browarna Street where you came once, madame, to take away that dead boy's body from the street—remember? And now I would like to stay with you here."

The boy looked imploringly at each of us in turn, as if afraid that we would send him away. Scholar shrugged his shoulders and looked at Sweeper, as much as to say: "Let him stay here, if he wants."

But Sweeper was of a suspicious nature. He looked threateningly at the boy and blurted out: "And suppose you are a spy?"

The boy was shaken, as if someone had suddenly thrown a bucketful of cold water in his face. Then he drew himself up, and answered rather haughtily:

"You are wrong, Lieutenant. I am not a spy. I've been longer than a day or two with the Home Army, and I know

all about spies. How could you take me for one, sir?"

"Why shouldn't I?" Sweeper snorted

The boy looked up at him with clear eyes. There was just a sparkle of teasing in their depths.

"I know a spy when I see one," he said. Then, frightened by his own temerity, he rattled on. "Why, I've helped here already in mending the breaches in the barricade and I have talked to you, too, Lieutenant, and you never said a word. Before the Uprising I used to paste things on the walls, and distribute the Underground papers. You can use me, I know."

I ducked to avoid a shot from across the street just as I asked the lad a question. He answered, and his philosophy seemed peculiarly wholesome. "Let the Allied planes come over, and things will change. We just got to wait and to fight."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen. I finished school and was to be a carpenter's apprentice. My father's a carpenter. But the Uprising broke out and there was no time."

Now the enemy planes came overhead, and we dropped all idle talk. First we heard the evil growl, then, the bursts of explosions. Unceasingly from then on continued the roar of bombardment mixed with the dull heavy groans of gutted earth. The barking of Putkowski's machine gun reached us feebly at times; it would stop and then pick up its song again.

"Aneri," Scholar's voice was quivering with some emotion I could not understand. "Please, go down to the cellar. You are not needed here now and it's dangerous for you to be here."

"The ideal!" I scoffed. "Are you going to give me a hot water bottle and tuck me in bed, too? What's the matter with you, Scholar? Do you think I've never been in a tight spot before?"

'Are you pretending or don't you really understand, Aneri? The situation is most serious. You shouldn't...'

"O Jesus!" I moaned. An explosion threw me against the wall. It took my breath away. I struggled for air, and called. "Scholar! Scholar!"

No one answered.

The boys came running to me, and pulled me up on my feet. I looked around. There was no more pillbox, no more machine gun. A huge smoking crater was there, with earth piled up high all around as if it had been dug out evenly by the hand of man.

Scholar was under the debris, buried up to his neck. It was as if someone had put him there, standing, and piled all the stones around him. Only his head stuck out. His face was livid with pain. I ran over to him and began to throw off the stones. He opened his eyes, but their heavy lids were veiled by a curtain of blood streaming from a head wound. I wiped them tenderly.

"I wanted you to go down!" Scholar shouted. "I told you to go down! I knew it would happen. . . . One does know these things, always. Are you all right, Aneri, are you all right?"

I held his head in both my hands. I could not raise him any higher. The boys were feverishly clearing away the debris, trying to free him.

"Don't shout, Scholar, I can hear you well. I am all right," I kept repeating. "Are you in pain? We'll get you out of here."

Scholar looked at me with his glorious eyes. Quiet tears rolled down his cheeks, mixing with blood.

"Don't, don't cry, Scholar," I begged, sobbing. "Don't cry. We'll get you out. Don't cry, it will be all right."

With both hands I stroked his bloody, martyred head, kissing his eyes.

"I . . . I was . . ."

"Don't talk, Scholar. You'll talk later, when we get you out, when you feel better," I sobbed.

"I was...so happy...you were with...me...working...together...you were...for me...O Jesus!"

Blood rushed out of his mouth and drenched my face, my hands, my hair. I felt its sweet taste in my mouth. Those eyes closed. Scholar died.

The last bricks were removed. I saw that both Scholar's legs had been crushed, and a large splinter had been driven deep into his chest. There was no wood for a coffin nor time to nail the planks together if we got them. They wanted to bury him in the garden, behind our row of houses, but I insisted on burying him right where he fell, in the crater made by the bomb. We laid him down in the pit in a half-sitting position, his face turned eastward, and I covered his mouth with a white handkerchief to keep the soil out. Quickly we covered him with soft earth. Sweeper said a short prayer.

Then I was left alone at Scholar's grave. I tried to pat it down with bare hands. I drew a sign of the cross on the fresh mound, and looked up in a vague, wild hope that I would see God Himself up in the sky, at last dispensing His justice sternly.

German planes were overhead again. They circled endlessly, looking for their targets. No bombs fell. They had brought leaflets again, like yesterday. I picked one up: "Give yourself up to the German authorities. The camp at Pruszkow will receive you all. There are beds for you prepared there, beds with fresh sheets, and warm food. No one will torture you. Freedom and work await you."

I thought of clean, soft beds, and my bones ached. Then I tried to imagine the taste of good, hot food, and I felt sick. Again I looked at Scholar's grave, where our pillbox had been, and I knew that this was our last burial. In the

hours to come we would just have to dump the bodies into open ditches and leave them there

Andrew was not in the pillbox when the bomb fell. But the sixteen-year-old volunteer in tatters, the future carpenter of Radom, lay quietly by the wall, a mortal wound in his temple.

Two boys, armed with small bottles of explosives, stood where our pillbox and machine gun used to be. A worthy weapon, indeed! On the barricade I heard the boys hum a frivolous song, and I was horrified to realize that Scholar's death no longer mattered, once we had buried him.

Nalecz did not come back. Help did not arrive. Walls of houses crumbled one after the other. Incendiaries set others aflame. We tried to extinguish these fires with sand, and occasionally we met with success.

"The tanks!" one of the boys called.

"To the Piats!" Sweeper shouted, and immediately relief crews ran to where the Piats were posted.

In the small passage leading to the cellar a gust of air threw me against the wall for the second time that day. Someone helped me to my feet. Again I could not hear. My legs were covered with blood. The soldier who had been posted at the entrance to the passage was beheaded by the shell. His head rolled a few yards away from his body. Children screamed, until somebody had the presence of mind to spread burlap sacking over the horrible remains. The soldier's gun and grenades lay strewn about.

My head was rent by the tolling of a thousand bells. I wrapped a wet towel around it, and dared not complain even to my innermost self. At least I was still alive.

Two wounded boys came into the cellar. Zofia and I set to work on them immediately. The left eye of one was almost out.

"You're from the barricade?"

"That's right."

"Any other wounded there?"

"You don't have to bother. Those that lie there won't need you any more, sister."

Madame Bronislava burst into the cellar screaming wildly. "Aneri, Aneri! Marek's wounded. Come quick!" and she darted out again through the great breach in the wall.

A bloody spectre swayed into the cellar now. With his right hand he held up his left arm, torn off, but still dangling from a ribbon of flesh. Unable to speak, he jerked his head back, trying to tell us that other wounded were waiting outside.

Bronislava ran in again, crying "Why aren't you coming, for God's sake? Marek may die there!"

"And why do you run back and forth instead of bringing him here?" I snapped back. "Why should I be the one to brave the tanks? Why should I always be the one to do it?"

"It's your duty!" Bronislava shouted. The word brought me back to my senses. I finished dressing the torn-off arm, and was just going out for Marek when they brought him in at last.

"Marek! Good Jesus! Zofia!"

I had never before seen anyone wounded that way. Marek was unconscious. He bled but a little from his mouth. His eyes were popping out and his face was like the faces of men hanging from the gallows, swollen and purplish-blue. His pulse was normal. We could find no wound on his body. But his throat rattled with death. We gave Marek a shot of morphine and pushed him close to the wall, leaving him unconscious and unseeing.

I ran to the stairs and tried to climb them. Twice they crumbled beneath me, and I fell in the stinking water flooding the cellar. Finally I got out. There were some bodies lying on the barricade. But others took their places, and I saw them swinging their grenades. One of the boys,

wounded, was moaning I heaved him up and carried him, fireman's way, down to the cellar.

All our sanitary supplies had disappeared in the meantime "A shell," Zofia quietly explained. Our table with medicines, injections, dressings had been destroyed completely, and there was hardly anything we could retrieve from the wreckage

"Kill me, Aneri!" the wounded boy moaned "Don't let them get me Kill me, for the love of God!"

He died a few minutes later But Marek was still writhing in agony, and we could do nothing to help him. They brought in a new batch of wounded The cellar was full of blood All we had was some dirty water and a bit of gauze. We tore into long strips some sheets we had found in the cellar and bandaged the wounds with them.

Three soldiers burst in

"We're withdrawing, Aneri. Get ready"

"Good Lord! And what about the wounded?"

"I'll stay," Zofia said. And she left for the cellar of No 25 where her old mother was. "I'll stay here. You go, Aneri"

I was left alone in the cellar, amidst shattered ruins and rows of cots and mattresses moaning with wounded. Something soft nestled against my legs I looked down: Kavtek, my Persian. It had long since been decided that should the Germans take our post and force us to withdraw, I would put Kaytek to sleep I had it all prepared, all planned. Now was the moment.

I took the hypodermic and looked at the splendid animal, worn out with the weeks of fighting just as we people were, yet nestling with confidence at my feet. I felt I could not do it I threw the hypodermic into a heap of rubbish.

Rola, Pavel and Piotr ran in. Rola pulled me by the hand.

"Come on, Aneri. We've got to find some way out. The Krauts are in the pillbox already. We're out of ammunition. They'll shoot us if we remain here."

The barricade above us was silent, though the Germans were still shelling our positions heavily. No one was left to answer the German fire. I felt a burning pain: a shell-fragment had hit me. I didn't even know where the wound was. There was no time to stop and look. I ran after Rola.

In the cellar of No. 25 people flocked to us, begging that we raise the white flag of surrender. Someone, sobbing, tried to hoist up a white sheet. I snatched it and pulled it down roughly.

"No surrender!"

The crowd obeyed without a murmur.

In the cellar of No. 21 the water was as high as our knees. Three times I stumbled while running and toppled forward, my face down. Rola and Piotr pulled me out.

Piotr ran out of the cellar first. We followed him. The street here was clear of smoke, and there was sunshine. Piotr dashed up to the door of a ground-floor apartment.

"Oh, look! This will be the best way out for us! I shall..."

A bullet whizzed. I saw its sharp gleam. It buried itself in the boy's ear. A fountain of blood shot out. Piotr was gently falling on his knees before the door. His eyes were still open, and showed surprise. His mouth still smiled, a glad smile, that he had found a way out.

Raucous German yells resounded outside.

"Change to civilian!" Rola called, as we went back again, plunging into the water of the cellars. Rola tore off his red-and-white armband and destroyed his pink card of membership in the Home Army. Others undressed quickly. I tore to shreds my own card that had been holiest of all to me. The tiny shreds of pink cardboard fell into

the water, together with our arms, our Home Army arm-bands and our blood

"Soldiers, comrades, brothers," a weak voice was calling behind my back, the voice of a dying man. I wheeled around. A man was flung across a bed, his head hanging down. He wore gray overalls. One of us. Who was it? I could not recognize him. He was covered with blood.

"My eyes, wash my eyes off. Let me see the world once again! Or kill me, brothers, kill me! Do not let me die from a German bullet. Kill me! Kill me!"

Good Lord! Suddenly I knew the voice. "Andrew!" I called.

"Aneri," the boy sobbed. "I knew you would not let me die. God is kind."

"Rola, we must get some civilian clothes for him, and change his outfit."

Mrs. Kempf's daughter quickly brought a civilian coat and a pair of trousers for Andrew, and some more clothes for the other wounded boys. We helped them change, our hands feverish with haste.

Rola held his gun in his hand lovingly, loath to part with it.

"Don't throw it away, Rola," I called instinctively. "Don't! Give it to me. Perhaps we can hide it somewhere."

I felt a pair of eyes fixed upon me, and turned my head to see who it was. Sitting in the corner of the cellar was an old woman, all attention. She was of German origin, and we had suspected her of reporting a few of our men to the Gestapo before the Uprising. In the first days of August we had sent her to Captain Krybar, the Commander of Group VIII, who was in charge of such cases. He had not considered the case important enough and had sent her back with the promise that it would be investigated later, when all Warsaw was in our hands.

"Rola," I whispered "She'll betray us."

Rola's blue eyes grew hard and cold. His haste and his emotion disappeared as he turned toward the old woman. "I'll kill her," he said quietly.

"No. We can't do that!" I protested. It had been driven too deeply into my consciousness during my years in the Underground never to permit any one to deal out justice outside of the proper channels. Rola felt it, too. He dropped his gun and his two hand grenades into the water. The German woman must have sensed that we were talking about her. She looked up and said. "Change your clothes quickly. I'll help you. I'll give you some civilian clothes, too."

I never knew whether she had been so frightened that she felt it best to help us escape death, or whether the crust of her German inhumanity had broken down in these last moments of agony.

Andrew whimpered for help and begged us not to leave him alone.

"I won't leave you, Andrew," I said. "I'll stay with you here, don't worry."

"No! no! I want to go with you. You'll see, Aneri. I can walk. I'll walk."

I put my arm around the boy and dragged him off his bed. One of his eyes was out. Both his legs were horribly mangled. His face was covered with a thick coat of blood.

"Andrew, you can't walk. Let me stay with you here," I begged. But Andrew's bloody arm gripped my neck as in a vise.

"I can go," he blurted. "Let me go. I want to live."

Hand grenades were being hurled into the cellars, as drunken voices outside yelled: "*Raus! Alle Raus!*"

"We have to go out," Andrew said with great effort, staring through a tiny slit in his purplish swollen left eye.

"Hold on to me, Andrew. We'll make it, all right."

The stairs were steep and in runs. Ahead of us Madame Yadviga Z, in her ninth month, was trying to climb them alone, but could not make them with the burden in her womb. Rola helped her up. Then I came with Andrew.

With every step, fresh blood spurted out of his many wounds. I walked on his right, because he had a large, bleeding wound on the left side of his chest, just below the shoulder.

"*Raus!* All you bandits come out of there," German voices shouted.

A line from a Polish poem kept recurring in my mind
"*But those who live, let them not forsake hope.*"

A grenade exploded in the cellar, and a child fell with one short cry. Then, we reached the surface.

A German soldier was waiting for us. I was not aware of him till he grabbed my right hand, slippery with Andrew's blood, and pulled a ring off my finger. Then he looked at the other hand and at my wrists, for bracelets or a gold watch, perhaps.

I felt the muzzle of a gun pressing against my chest, and saw them do the same to Andrew who was swaying on his feet.

"*Bandit!*" A German non-com, with the armband of the Red Cross on his uniform sleeve, pointed to Andrew. And with a sudden quick gesture, he tore the coat from the boy's left shoulder.

"I saw him on the barricade!" he shouted. "I shot him myself. This is my method of shooting. I recognize the wound."

The German held a handsome British gun in his hand. It had been flown in for us, probably. He aimed it at Andrew.

"I'll shoot the bandit like a filthy dog!" he fumed.

Another German soldier knocked down sideways the muzzle of his gun. Pointing to the Red Cross armband on

the non-com, the soldier pushed him aside and ordered us to go on, toward the barricade

The street was full of Germans. The house where Sweeper's post had been was dying in flames. The ditch on our side of the barricade was crammed with dead bodies. And in the cellars at least a dozen wounded remained

Andrew was walking with increasing difficulty. He grew so heavy I was afraid I could not support him much longer. He was suffering terribly.

"Andrew," I said. "Remember. We had no part in the Uprising. You worked on a construction job at 19 Topiel Street. You were wounded, but you don't remember when. And I don't know you. They told me to take you out now. You understand?"

"Yes, Aneri," he answered in a touching, childish voice.

"Andrew, remember not to say anything else if they question us. I will do the same. Don't change your story. Don't believe them if they say I had told them something else. I won't."

"Yes, Aneri."

"Andrew, please believe that everything will be all right in the end. And if we have to die, well, one has to die sometime anyway, doesn't one?"

"Yes, Aneri."

Madame Yadviga Z. could not climb over the piles of stones on the barricade. She dragged herself piteously, like a huge bee.

One German tank stood at the lower end of Obozna Street, right near our barricade, a few yards away from Scholar's grave. Another one, standing at the upper end of the street, near Krakowskie Przedmiescie, was surrounded by many Germans. They were tossing hand grenades into the crowd herded up Obozna Street. Some fell. Others pushed ahead, prodded on by the Germans at the bottom of the street. A small group of women was carrying

a white flag But the German grenades did not spare them either

The cross that I had drawn in sand on Scholar's grave was still clearly marked.

We dragged our heavy steps, leaving a trail of Andrew's blood behind Each step for one man who had died fighting here Sparrow . . and Yanosik . . and Scholar . . the youngest of all, Marek . . . Piotr, with a bullet in his ear . . handsome Lieutenant Jeremi, Sweeper's second in command, after Zoch . . . Stefan . . . Jan . . . Leon . . . Henryk . . . Pociecha . . . Zbik . . . The roll call of the dead was endless.

Suddenly it sounded as if someone were singing in this wailing crowd. But could it be? I leaned forward to see The words of *Rota* now reached me clearly, sung at the top of a woman's voice. I saw her walking up Obozna Street, carrying a small child in her arms Tears blurred my eyes. I wiped them off. The child lay queerly in her mother's embrace She was dead. Her head was hanging precariously from her frail body, having been almost completely severed The mother marched on, unconscious of fear or pain, singing

*"They will never trample us down,
Or make our children German
We will rise again,
The Spirit will lead us"*

"Stop her!" someone shouted. But it was too late. The woman ran up to the German tank still singing the song of defiance She hurled the dead body of her child at a German. Then she fell. A grenade had killed her.

A shower of grenades sprayed Obozna Street. People stood motionless, speechless, fixed to the ground, frozen in their horror.

"*Raus!*" The German butts came down heavily on our

backs. Our bodies twisted in pain. The procession moved on. Of the eighty members of Unit 2, Company 4, Group VIII, there were four of us here: Rola, Pavel, Andrew and myself.

BEYOND THE GATE of the University grounds the world was green with the still vigorous and deep verdure of summer's last days. The Germans were laughing at us. They watched us file by, a winding procession of emaciated, staggering people, smeared with blood, and they roared with laughter.

They took Andrew away from me. All men were herded separately. I remained with the large group of women and children. A woman gave me a scarf: "Here, wrap this around your head," she said kindly. "Your hair is caked with blood. It'll draw the flies to you."

I took the scarf and tied it around my head. Reaching in my inside pocket I found, much to my horror, the badge of Company 4, a Polish eagle, embroidered by Mrs. Wo-sicka. In the event of a search, the emblem would brand me immediately as a "bandit," a member of the Home Army. Unobtrusively, I ground a hole with my heel in the soft sand, dropped in it the badge with the eagle, covered it with sand again, and flattened the spot with my foot.

Three Germans made their way through the crowd of women and children, pushing them aside, scanning everybody with their searching eyes. One of them was the Red Cross non-com who had boasted of his own "shooting system." He pointed at me, and the tall sergeant in command pulled me out of the group harshly.

"Get going," he said curtly.

"They'll kill her!" some women wailed behind me, as they were leading me away.

"You're one of those bandits," the sergeant half-asked, half-declared.

"What do you mean? I don't understand you."

"That man you brought here He was a bandit, your soldier, and you are one, too"

"I am not. And he was a worker, not a soldier, either"

"That we'll see in a moment. Remember now: don't speak until you're spoken to, or we'll shoot you."

Thus, covered by guns, I was taken to the wall at the other end of the campus where three men were lined up. Coming closer I recognized Andrew and Pavel. The third one was a complete stranger. The three stood facing the wall. "To be executed!" flashed through my mind. Then the sergeant pushed me hard, toward the wall. I fell and hit the wall with my head. The scarf slid from my blood-caked hair.

"Get up!" His voice whipped me. "Stand up there, with the other bandits, your pals."

I got up and stood by Andrew, facing the wall, clearly conscious of the finality of the moment. They'll question us some more, and then . . .

"Now, don't lie! Lying won't help you," the sergeant admonished us.

"Why bother with questioning them? I could swear they are all bandits," the Red Cross man insisted. "Let's shoot them and be done with the whole business."

I stared dumbly at the wall before my face. I raised my head high, not in pride or defiance, but because the wall was chipped above my head, and I could fasten my eyes on the hole there. Only one thought persistently buzzed in my brain. Will the bullet hit me in the head and will it hurt much?

The German sergeant pulled brusquely at my arm. I turned around and saw his lips were moving; he must have been asking a question. I looked into his eyes, and slowly it dawned upon me that he was addressing me in Polish. Sheepishly I asked. "Are you speaking to me?"

"To whom else, stupid? We know you are a bandit, too. You were on that barricade, shooting at our soldiers."

"No. I was not."

"Well, they were shooting then, weren't they?" he pointed at the three men facing the wall. Andrew was slumping from exhaustion and loss of blood.

"I have nothing to add to what I have already told you," I answered, trying to sound firm.

"You hear? She told us you are a bandit!" With one quick, practiced gesture he swung Andrew around. Then he struck a hard blow at Andrew, whose face was bloody and whose body was torn by many wounds. I swore then that I would never forgive that blow, in life or in death, never.

Andrew swayed. His one eye, half-blind from swelling, now closed. I stretched out my hand to help him. The German slapped my hand down.

"I don't know this woman. I don't know what she told you. But I am not a bandit," Andrew said, speaking very slowly, very quietly, with great effort. His voice sounded dead and frightening.

They made me face the wall again. The sergeant gave the orders to shoot. We waited . . . and waited . . .

A terrific explosion shook the University. Heavy caliber guns were shelling Warsaw. The shells came from the direction of the Vistula. There could be no doubt about it. Could it be, at last? Those cannon could only be Soviet. Waiting for the bullet, I lapsed into indifference again. Death was too near to think of anything except: Will the bullet hit me in the head and will it hurt much?

"Don't you have anything else to say?" the German sergeant whispered over my shoulder in a soft voice. It took me quite a while to come to and gather my thoughts.

"Nothing else."

"Are you sure there's nothing you'd like to tell us?" the voice was smooth, and its very smoothness stirred me out of my stupor and put me on the alert. Had he bellowed, I might still have been waiting for my bullet.

"Nothing," I said

"Run then," the German ordered.

I thought. "They'll kill me running!" They so often did, making it easy to explain that the prisoner had been trying to escape. I took three steps backward, slow steps wary steps, without looking back, without expecting life. I felt a sharp, tearing pain in the small of my back. But I heard no shots. I turned around. The three Germans were not even looking at me. They were watching Pavel and the other man who were also departing, but in the opposite direction. Andrew was still standing at the wall. The pain I had felt was only imaginary, yet I was as sure of it as if shots had been fired at me.

As I trudged on, I glanced back once more. The Germans were dragging Andrew away. I prayed that someone would be charitable enough to dress his wounds. Bitter tears swelled in my throat.

It was the last time I ever saw Andrew.

German soldiers and non-coms ran through our groups like sheep dogs, making us stand in ranks, four abreast. In the moving crowd, falling in ranks, I came upon Zofia. She was there with her old mother, carrying a tiny bundle in her hand. I guessed right away a little food, medicine and injections for her mother. I touched Zofia's shoulder lightly. She turned around, and when she saw me tears streamed down her face.

"You are alive?" she said incredulously. "But they told me you had been shot... with some soldiers."

"They changed their minds," I told her.

"No speaking here!" a German shouted.

I stayed with Zofia and her mother, and decided to share their lot.

The Germans marched us then to the main gate of the University. On the way we could see how recklessly foolish we had been to attack the University in the first days

of the Uprising. The campus was bristling with guns. ack-acks, mortars, even one "shrieking cow." We saw stacks of rifles and unopened, fresh cases of ammunition, and I recalled how each gun, each cartridge was worth more than its weight in gold to our men.

Through the streets of Warsaw we went, a mournful procession of bedraggled ghosts, past houses on fire, past dead bodies sprawled on the asphalt and on the cobblestones, and now and then a destroyed German tank. On Elektoralna Street, Zofia's mother collapsed. We laid her flat on the pavement. Our column marched on. The Germans paid no attention to our little group.

Zofia untied her little bundle. She took out a small bottle of medicine.

"Mother, dearest, please open your eyes," she begged. "Drink this. We have to go. Don't let the Germans see our weakness. Please drink it. You'll feel better right away."

The beautiful old lady opened her eyes slowly. She tried to get up. But she could not. The sight of that lovely frail woman, with a face as white as death, lying on the filthy, blood-spattered pavement, did something to me. I went up to a German directing traffic at the nearest cross street, and told him that we were to go to Pruszkow Camp, that with us was an old woman who could not move, and that if we were to get to our destination, they had better take us there. It was sheer madness on my part. One old woman's death would not have made the slightest difference to the Germans in that sea of death into which we had been plunged.

But a miracle happened. The German stopped a lorry, and ordered the driver to take Zofia's mother. After much cajoling, he allowed Zofia and me to accompany her.

They brought us to Wola, that district of Warsaw where on the day of Sparrow's death five hundred boy scouts, sent to relieve Home Army units, had been butchered by the Germans. Wola had fought hard. I had seen

nothing like it in all Warsaw. Dead bodies of women and children, of men still wearing the armbands of the Home Army, lay stacked evenly on both sides of the street, in front of smoking and burning houses. We could see gangs of prisoners, under the supervision of Germans, cleaning the streets and piling the corpses in those dreadfully neat stacks.

The lorry dropped us in front of St. Stanislaus' Church, where thousands of people were already gathered. Machine guns and soldiers surrounded the crowd on all sides. I shivered. Was there to be a mass execution after all, and not Pruszkow for us?

They drove us inside the church. They weeded out all the men, and led them away. Crying and sobbing broke out in the church. The women were sure the men would be shot. They wailed loudly, desperately. The stench in the church was stifling. The Germans had used it as a reshuffling center ever since the fall of Wola, and it was filthy with mud and excrement.

Outside a voice called out that we could have water. I found a big can with a string attached to it, and went with four other women to look for it. A German guard was posted at the gate of the churchyard.

"Don't go there alone," a young voice cautioned me in good Polish, without an accent. "The Ukrainians may carry you off to their barracks. They're a bad lot. We've had to shoot a few of them already."

The guard surprised me by his good Polish and his friendly voice. His face seemed familiar. Where could I have seen him before? The man wore a Gestapo uniform. I moved on puzzled. And then, in a flash, I remembered that I had met him before and that he was a member of our Underground. Despite his Gestapo uniform, I was quite sure that he was one of our men.

The "Gestapo-man" came over to our little group, and

conducted us to the water. He did not speak all the way, I wondered whether he had recognized me, too.

The water was good. Following the example of others, I took off my tennis shoes, and stood in the cool stream of water pouring from one of two pumps, and drank long, till my throat lost that taste of dry blood. After washing my neck and my head, I breathed freshly again. Someone took me by the elbow and offered to help me put on my tennis shoes. It was the "Gestapo-man." He steadied me with his hand when I was putting the shoes on.

"Don't try to run away," he whispered, without opening his mouth, without moving his lips. My heart jumped. So he did recognize me.

"Our men are in the country. They manage to free some transports. Better go to Pruszkow. You'll be able to get out of the camp. There are two of us even here."

I finished fumbling with the laces of my tennis shoes, and started back for the gate. The "Gestapo-man" began to shout and yell at people in perfect Gestapo manner, for which I admired him sincerely. New hope entered my heart. All was not yet over. The Underground was carrying on.

Back in the church, I wound my way toward the main altar to thank God for allowing the Underground to go on and the nation's spirit to live. On the side of the altar sat my friend Nela's mother. She saw me coming, and immediately stretched out a hand and gave me a slice of bread and a piece of bacon, a delicacy which made my throat tighten. I had to struggle with myself to eat it.

A German gendarme was making his way through the crowd, aimlessly, it seemed. He stopped not far from where I sat.

"Are you alone?" he asked me in broken Polish.

"Oh, no," I answered instinctively, without a moment's

hesitation. "I'm with my grandmother, she is sick, and with my aunt. There they are," I pointed to Zofia who was spreading her coat on the stone floor of the church to make her mother as comfortable as possible

"Well, it doesn't matter. You'll report to the captain, anyway."

"What captain? What for?"

"We'll find some work for you, don't worry."

"All right," I submitted meekly. "But I'll have to tell my grandmother that I'm going. And will you please come for me? I won't be able to find my way around here."

The gendarme grunted and strutted away, looking for other victims

Zofia heard the news with alarm. She conferred with the daughters of Mrs. Kempfi and with another woman whom I hardly knew. They found some peroxide and decided to bleach my hair. They poured it all over my head, but as the solution was weak it helped but little. They then combed my hair a different way, rubbed my face with some cream, drew lines around my mouth, gave me eye-glasses to wear, and tied a bright scarf around my neck. One woman took away my bloodstained coat, and let me put on her own. Thus disguised, I stayed behind the pulpit, and watched the gendarme come around and ask Zofia about me. He went looking for me everywhere. When his eyes slipped over me indifferently, I became convinced that he would not recognize me, and I came forward boldly and remained right near him for quite a while. He could not find me.

In the morning they formed us in ranks and drove us to the Western Station. A train was waiting to take us to the Pruszkow Camp. There were three decent passenger cars of the suburban line. The rest were cattle cars. We were loaded into them. Our transport was made up of only women and children. I lost Zofia and her mother in the crowd.

The train started. Some of the women amongst us actually looked forward to Pruszkow, remembering the German leaflets which had promised soft beds, clean sheets and warm food there. I had no such illusions.

We stopped at the small suburban station of Wlochy. Several local Polish women, who had organized a relief committee, were distributing bread and coffee to the deportees in the cars. The Germans had, for some reason, allowed this good work, conducted ever since the first transports to Pruszkow had begun to flow from embattled Warsaw, to be carried on.

The train moved on again. A few minutes later we arrived in Pruszkow. The guards opened the doors of the cars, and shouted. "Get out!"

A close line of German soldiers, armed to the teeth, guarded the train. Beyond, some two hundred yards away, there were clusters of people calling to us. When a few of them approached us, we saw that they were women wearing the armbands of the Polish Red Cross! I could hardly believe it at first.

We stood before a high wall, facing a strong, iron gate, bearing a large number "14" painted white. Some German officers were at the gate, their notebooks in hand, to count the newly-arrived prisoners. Inside, behind the gate, they made us stop and wait for a long time. Then a sharp voice called to us in correct Polish with but a slight mixture of the harsh German accent "*Barak piaty! To Barrack 5*"

It was around ten in the morning of September 5, 1944, when we arrived at Camp Pruszkow. On the way from Gate 14, we were made to pass in single file large cases filled with tomatoes and loaves of bread cut in quarters. German soldiers handed to each person three tomatoes and a quarter of a loaf. I could not bring myself to accept the food.

Perhaps half a mile away, the huge bulk of Barrack 5 loomed ominously ahead of us.

Barbed wire was strung around and sentries were posted along the enclosure. Inside, several thousand people were mulling about, looking for an unoccupied straw mat or a wooden plank or a corner in which to spread their poor belongings and rest their tired feet.

A few women wearing Red Cross armbands were in the barrack. I looked at them warily, fearing to approach one without making sure that I had the right person. Moving slowly through the crowded building, I came to a closed door on which a card was tacked, reading in Polish DOCTOR'S OFFICE. RECEPTION HOURS: 9-12 A. M.

The discovery that there was some medical assistance at the camp was reassuring. I edged closer to the doctor's door and sat down on the floor to watch and size up the situation. I concluded, after some observation, that a small staff of Polish physicians and nurses, both men and women, were working at the camp under strict German supervision. During my wait I noticed a middle-aged woman in a knitted yellow "beanie" coming in and out of the doctor's office. I studied her carefully, scanning her sad, reddish face and appraising the expression of her eyes. I decided to trust her. The next time she appeared, holding in her hand a long list of names with numbers next to them, I murmured: "Excuse me, madame, can you spare a moment for me? It's very important."

She looked at me with tired eyes and nodded. For an instant doubt attacked me: "Suppose she is a German?" But I had to take a chance.

"I'm from the Home Army," I said quickly. "Of course, they can't discover that. I don't want to be sent on from here. I have to stay in the camp. I've studied medicine, almost finished the course. My little daughter is still in Warsaw. I must remain here and wait for her. Perhaps with the Red Cross."

The woman put a finger to her lips and after giving me a long, probing look, she led me, without a word, to the

doctor's office. There was no one in the first room. She left me there, and went into the next room. She soon returned with a German physician in army uniform and, pointing at me, said. "She is an interne, as I told you. She wants to work as a nurse in the camp, Dr. Pump. She has no papers. We need nurses so badly."

Dr. Pump, a man in the forties, blondish, looked at me wearily through his glasses. I could find no lines of cruelty around his mouth. He did not smile, but I had a feeling that he was not a bad man.

A patient was ushered into the room, a man who had his right arm amputated right below his shoulder. A thick wad of gauze, saturated with pus and dirt, hung from the stump of the arm.

Dr. Pump looked at the woman in the yellow "beanie." Then he looked at me, and pointed to the newcomer.

"You take care of that man," he said curtly.

This was to be an examination, I realized. On the way in which I handled the case depended whether I would be allowed to stay at the camp. I tried to collect my usual coolheadedness, as I told the man to take a seat on a bench by the wall.

Scissors? No, there were no scissors to cut off the filthy dressing. I looked over the small table displaying all the medical supplies which Barrack 5 could boast: one bottle of peroxide, a few measly squares of gauze, a roll of toilet paper. . . . That was all.

I tore off the gauze and the tampon from the arm's stump but drew back quickly, horrified and sickened. A nauseating stench of putrefaction hit us hard. The wound was swarming with maggots. No amount of nursing or medical experience can make one immune to the sight of wormy wounds. I know of nothing more repulsive than the knots of glistening greenish-white worms twisting on a festering wound.

The man did not utter a word. With his good left hand

he pulled the shreds of his shirt sleeve away from the swollen stump. His silence was so complete that I looked at him, and mastered my own nausea with great effort. The man's face was ashen pale, his lips tightly drawn. He was looking at Dr. Pump and his German uniform, and the speechless accusation in his eyes made the German squirm. For a moment I thought Dr. Pump would collapse. His face grew pale, too, at the sight of the wound. He mopped his forehead, and whispered desperately "*Mein Gott! Mein Gott!*"

With a small piece of gauze I wiped off the worms and gathered them in a small cardboard box. Dr. Pump took himself in hand. "What do you want to do?" he asked. I pointed to the small table and its almost non-existent medical supplies. Dr. Pump averted his eyes.

"How long have you had that tampon in your wound?" I turned to the patient who was still quiet.

"Ten days," he answered, "or perhaps a little more. The Germans would not let us out of the cellar."

I pulled the tampon out. The pus flowed freely, and the rest of the worms with it. Lightly, gently I began to press the swollen stump. The pus ran until blood showed. With the small pieces of gauze, moistened in peroxide, I tried to clean the wound. I then poured the peroxide from the bottle on the wound itself, covered it with as many squares of gauze as there were left, and bandaged the stump with the toilet paper. I endeavored to make the bandage tight and the dressing thick, but it did not come out so well.

I passed the examination, however, and was allowed to stay at the Pruszkow Camp as a Red Cross nurse. Dr. Pump obtained for me a pass card, which read:

"DULAG 121, Pruszkow am 6.9 1944.

Irena Bytniewska ist als Schwester im Auffanglager Pruszkow eingesetzt. Sie darf sich im Lager frei bewegen und die Hallen betreten."

The pass was signed by Dr Koenig and by the *Lager-fuehrer*, the commander of the camp. It gave me freedom of movement in the grounds and buildings, but not the right to leave the camp at any time and for any purpose, however good.

With the precious pass card in my possession, I made my way slowly through the various crowded barracks in search of people from our post. I found Sergeant Putkowski, the one who had kept his machine gun hidden in the cellar of his grocery store for five years before the Uprising. I ran into Pavel, but I could find neither Rola nor Andrew. Pavel did not know what had happened to them. In Barrack 6, I found Lieutenant Skala, who burst out crying when he saw me. In tears, he told me that he had been in the cellar of No. 27 when the Germans broke in. Marek was lying unconscious there, and there were a few other of our casualties in that cellar. The Germans murdered all our wounded. Skala himself saw one of them bayonet Marek.

There were three permanent nurses at Barrack 5. I was to be the fourth. All three of them—Helena, Maria and Stasia—had been brought here by the Germans in the first few days of the Uprising from the prison on Dzielna Street where they had been employed as nurses.

Stasia S., a widow, whose only son was fighting in Warsaw in the ranks of the Home Army, let me share her mat and her blanket my first night in camp. We spent the night on some wooden planks covered by a piece of material. I did not sleep at all. We lay quietly, listening to the blasts of explosions in Warsaw. We could hear them distinctly, although a dozen miles away. Her son was there. My daughter was there, too.

I tried not to think, but could not. "Are you asleep, Irena?" Stasia whispered.

"No," I answered, seizing the slim chance of escaping

the tormenting thoughts "Please, Stasia, talk to me. I'm going mad."

"It won't help you much, what I've got to tell you," Stasia said quietly. "You cannot cry, Irena, I know you cannot. You've got to believe that your Barbarka will come here eventually, just as I believe that my boy will come, too."

Stasia went on speaking in an even, quiet voice which reminded me of Colonel Matylda. Then she asked. "Have you had your supper?"

"I don't want to eat I don't feel hungry. And, besides, even if I wanted to, I have no food."

Stasia got up without a word. She lit a candle and started to rummage in a small case under the table, on which we kept some iodine and water. She took out a bottle and a glass, one third of which she filled. She then cut off a slice of white bread, buttered it, and topped it with half a tomato.

"Drink this"—she handed me the glass—"and then eat that." She hovered over me, determined not to tolerate a word of opposition. I drank obediently. It was vodka. Then I took one bite of the bread, but could not eat any more. Tears welled up and choked me. Stasia showed no sympathy.

"Just as you wish," she said coldly, matter-of-factly. "If you don't want to see your daughter again, that's your own business, naturally. But let me tell you that people are sick from hunger in this camp."

She wiped off my tears with a harsh gesture, but there was tenderness and understanding in it, too.

"Where do you get white bread and butter and all these luxuries?"

"In the village, through the kind help of the nurses from the outside who come to work in the camp during the day. They'll do it for you, too."

"Do the Germans allow the nurses to bring in food for all deportees?"

"So far, yes, but only in most limited quantities. And the number of our doctors and nurses who are free to go in and out of the camp is very small." Stasia then turned toward me, and concluded. "You'd better try to sleep. You'll have a hard day tomorrow, you'll see."

Tearful, heart-rending cries of people vainly calling to God for help filled Barrack 5 in the morning. The Germans were segregating the deportees into groups to be assigned to various barracks, and many families were being torn apart. Children up to the age of fourteen were left with their mothers if the women had papers to prove that the children were theirs. Many had no papers at all. Men were separated from women rudely and with sneers. The old people were herded on the left, the young ones on the right. For further weeding out the old folks and mothers with small children were driven to Barrack 1, women from fifteen to fifty-five to Barrack 4, and all males above fourteen to Barrack 6.

The sight made me sick. I left the barbed-wire enclosure with the stream of people driven to their new barracks. In front of one of the buildings I came upon a cluster of Red Cross workers conspicuous in the crowd because of their white aprons and armbands. With them was a tall, elderly woman in a bonnet and a short, navy blue veil. She wore a sign around her neck, reading: *Dolmetscher*—the interpreter.

After being eyed by them suspiciously and following an exchange of probing words between us, one of the nurses asked: "Are you here expecting someone?"

"My daughter," I answered.

"I'm waiting for my husband, my sister and my parents," she said.

"And I for my daughters and for my son-in-law," one of her colleagues chimed in.

Before Barrack 3, I spotted two Red Cross girls collecting scraps of paper from the inmates there. Many voices implored

"Mine, too! Please take my message, too!"

"My husband and son are in Barrack 6 Please take a note to them."

"Me, too! Please, a word to my husband"

In Barrack 1, jammed with "unusables" for the German Reich, I stumbled on a family consisting of a grandmother, over sixty and desperately ill with dysentery, and five children. The eldest was a girl of ten, the youngest was but a few months old. The parents had been executed by the Germans on suspicion of having taken part in the Uprising. The grandmother, lying on a litter of thin, filthy straw, was moaning. The condition of the children made me cry

I stopped a passing Red Cross nurse. Pointing to the prostrate children, I urged. "We must do something."

The nurse shrugged her shoulders. Her mouth twitched, as she spoke with bitterness. "You don't know where I'm going at this very minute. It's even worse there. A woman is dying, and she had to pick just this moment to give birth to a child. She's bringing it forth dying, and she knows it, which is... Oh, damnation!" She went away quickly.

When I found that the whole family had had nothing to eat for two days, I went foraging for food. I had observed some barrels and cauldrons near the railroad tracks, and made my way to a car from which came the warm odor of a steaming liquid, smelling something like coffee. I stood there helpless for a moment.

"Do you want some?" a grating voice asked behind my back.

I knew that he was a German. The man was sloppy, unshaven, glistening with sweat. Through his open shirt

one could see black coarse hair on his chest. His high boots were filthy with manure. But his smile was kind.

"I must find something to eat for five little children and their sick grandmother. They haven't had anything for a long time."

The German said something I did not understand, but I followed him as he went to an open window in an adjoining building and climbed inside.

"Wait here," he told me.

Soon he appeared in the window with a package in his hand, and he gave it to me quickly, surreptitiously.

"You are new here," he said.

"Yes, I am. They let me stay as a nurse."

"They distribute soup once a day at each barrack," the German explained. "But if you are a nurse, you can eat with the Polish doctors and nurses. They have a special eating place, in the kitchen building."

He turned to go back to the car on the tracks. Then he added, as if remembering something. "Look out for the Green Car. Don't go there often. They are not human there. And, if you're hungry, come here. I'll always have something to eat for you."

He disappeared in the depths of the car. I opened the package, wrapped in coarse gray paper. It contained a can of condensed milk, a loaf of white bread, some candy, a piece of sausage, a bit of butter and sugar, and a cup, a spoon and a knife. I was dizzy from joy at the sight of these riches.

Walking back to Barrack 1, where the starved tots were huddled around their whimpering grandmother, I marveled at this manifestation of German kindness. Yet this was not the first instance of it in the five years of the German occupation.

I recalled how some years earlier, while waiting at a small provincial station for the train to Warsaw, I had

seen a German gendarme discover a woman smuggling food. As there was not much of it, it was obviously not for sale, but for herself and her family. She was old and frightened. The German bellowed at her. She began to run along the track, the gendarme after her, stabbing her with his bayonet. She kept screaming in despair, running toward the train, which was packed with young boys from the *Wehrmacht* going home on furlough. The soldiers called to the gendarme to leave the woman alone. He paid no attention to them, and pricked her with his bayonet. Then a few of the soldiers got off the train and ran to the gendarme. They snatched his bayonet from him and beat him up soundly. One of them seized the battered bundle of food and returned it to the woman, motioning to her to go on her way. Another pulled out his gun, quietly, unhurriedly, and shot the gendarme. Then they boarded their train again, without even looking back.

And now, incredible as it seemed to me, a sloppy, sweating German gave me bread and milk for starving Polish infants.

BARRACK 5 was vibrating with fresh excitement I rose on our mat and listened Stasia was already awake

"A new transport, probably," she said "Let's see from which part of Warsaw they brought them this time"

I rushed out in the night, calling loudly "Barbarka Bytniewska! Barbarka Bytniewska!"

No one answered Then I went from one to the other among the newcomers, asking frantically "Are you from Skorupki Street? Anyone here from Skorupki? I am looking for someone from Skorupki Street. Do you know what is going on at Skorupki Street?"

But no one answered me I convinced myself, however, that Barbarka was not in the transport Stasia feared to call out the name of her son because of his membership in the Home Army. She roamed through the throng, calling timidly the names of her relatives

In the morning I decided to try and obtain the release of the sick grandmother and her five little ones. Brazenly I went to Barrack 2, where the Medical Commission sat, and presented to Dr. Koenig my list of those to be released. He regarded me with slight amusement through narrowing eyes, but after he had examined the old woman with the little flock of children I had brought along he nodded to Ania, the beautiful Polish clerk sitting at his table. She wrote out the release notices hurriedly, and thrust them into my hand

The next step was a visit to the Green Car, and my first transport would be free. Before the barrier guarding it was a crowd of nurses, each with a Koenig-approved list in

hand. A few Germans were posted at the entrance, admitting no more than two or three nurses at a time.

The Green Car was divided into two compartments. They let me into the first one. I was so shocked at seeing a nun sitting there with a rosary at her waist that I did not even look at first at the Gestapo-man at her side. The woman wore the simple gray habit of the Ursuline Sisters. A bit of hair, with no lustre or softness to it, showed from under her close-fitted coif. She had large blue eyes, the only beautiful feature of her unpleasant face. Her skin was bad, her nose reddish and large. The papers I had brought to the Green Car for the Gestapo seal of approval lay on the table before her. After scanning them carefully, she spoke rapidly in German to the Gestapo officer. He took the papers in hand now. I looked at him and felt as if an iron had been plunged into me. The Gestapo-man was no stranger to me. He was the same man who had questioned me at Gestapo Headquarters some two years before. Not a muscle in my face twitched, as I strove hard to give no sign of recognition. I watched him move his pencil down the list of names. Clearly, my identity escaped him completely.

The old grandmother and her five children were allowed to go to some relatives at Piastow. As the cart on which they had loaded her and the little ones was passing me at the gate, she turned her tortured old head toward me and spoke in a weak, trembling voice. "May God bless you, my dear. May He guide your steps wherever you go and may He help you in your hour of need as you have helped those who needed your help."

The room where the nurses and the Polish doctors ate was filled to overflowing. They were serving cabbage soup that day. Everybody in the long, winding line was holding some sort of a vessel. One woman had a demitasse cup, another a tin can and still another a preserve jar. I had

nothing. I stepped out of the line and leaned against the wall. Sick from hunger, I closed my eyes

Someone touched my shoulder I looked up. A tall scarecrow of a man stood before me. He handed me his glass jar and an amazingly black spoon.

"I have eaten already," he said "Go ahead"

"How did you know I was hungry?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders, and replied "They took me from Warsaw, too. My family's still there. How long have you been here?"

"This is my third day," I said with some embarrassment as if I owed an apology for needing his help. "I am not yet familiar with conditions here"

"Listen to her," he laughed out loud "Conditions, she says. There are no conditions here, my dear lady. This is pure and unadulterated hell"

And then he looked closely at me. His eyes were shrewd, appraising.

"By the way," he added. "I am from Barrack 8. A doctor there, believe it or not. My name's Gregory"

I thanked him for the jar, and he invited me for a walk. I joined him, and we talked along. Yet it was not easy to trust one so soon. "Suppose he was a stool pigeon?" was the thought running through my mind. Gregory looked at me, and laughed uproariously. He patted me on the shoulder.

"You don't know people very well, do you?" he said. "Not Germans anyway. How come you don't trust me, if I trust you? Because I know you are one of our people, say what you will." He looked at me triumphantly.

Still a little reluctantly, I grinned back at Gregory. It turned out that he was an important Underground worker within the camp. He promised to provide me with a night pass.

"Can you really get me a permit to move about the camp during the night?" I asked.

"Of course," Gregory nodded, and I saw an amused sparkle in his eyes. "This is easy. But you must tell me your name, you know."

"Irena Bytniewska."

"All right, I'll bring it to you in the evening. I'll meet you outside Barrack 5."

At nightfall, Dr. Gregory thrust into my hands a card allowing me freedom of movement after the curfew hour. The pass seemed authentic. It had all the earmarks of the routine Gestapo job, including the seals and signatures. The very perfection of the thing frightened me. Suppose the scarecrow Dr. Gregory was a German agent, after all?

He led me to a small, wooden shack full of rubbish, and through a passage down into a narrow shelter. It was uncomfortable for more than one person, and I fidgeted not knowing why he bothered to bring me there. Then Gregory moved something and exposed the entrance to a new cavity big enough to hold only one person. He turned on his flashlight, and I saw a small radio hidden in that hole.

"I got it from a German who had decided he was sick and tired of war. He deserted and went back home to Breslau, leaving me his uniform, too, and what not. I've been trying to fix the set so I could send messages from here."

Dr. Gregory looked at me gravely, and spoke with urgency.

"You must understand why I am telling you all this and showing it to you. I can't work alone. Someone ought to know about it, if anything should happen to me. I trust you. I had to believe someone. Look,"—and he handed me some photographs—"this is my wife and my son. Try to remember their faces. They may come here from Warsaw yet, for all I know, just as your little girl may come. If, one day, you should miss seeing me at the kitchen or at Barrack 8, don't come here. You'll know what happened, and you won't be able to help me any more. But in that

event try to find my wife and my boy, and tell them how I waited for them here."

I knew I would remember the names and the addresses he gave me forever. He passed his hand over his eyes, and concluded: "And now, go and get some sleep. I don't need you here any longer."

As I was edging out of Gregory's hide-out, he called after me derisively: "If you get a chance one of these days, look in the mirror, will you? And do something about your face, beautiful."

I borrowed a small cracked mirror from Stasia, and stared at it incredulously. It was most shocking not to recognize the picture I thought I knew so well. The face that I saw in Stasia's mirror was dirty gray, with a swollen nose and big red pouches under swollen eyes. Nasty red veins stood out vertically on my neck. My hair was dull and disheveled. It was a hateful, ugly face.

I was posting notices about Barbarka in all the barracks when, to my joy, I came across Zofia again, after a lapse of several days. There were thousands of cards on the walls, giving the news of those who had gone through the camp. The messages were short, pathetic, on this order:

"Teofile Zajac, 17—deported to Breslau." "Zofia Mysiol—have been three days in Barracks 4 and 5—don't know where they're taking me now. Farewell." "Whoever knows Malwina Herliczko—notify her that her mother is being deported today. Her Warsaw address: Zlota 12. God be with you, my child."

With the help of Dr. Gregory and the interpreter, Janina, I placed two large signs high on the poles facing Gate 14, and on them I counted most. I hoped that as soon as Barbarka arrived with a transport and when it was lined up at the gate, either she or someone who knew her would not fail to notice my big lettering: "BARBARKA BYTNEWSKA—whatever the barrack you'll be assigned to,

go to the Doctor's office. Mother working with the Red Cross. Whoever knows anything about the girl—mother begging for news."

"I wonder if you could do something," a woman's voice addressed me. "It's *Madame la Générale*. You know her, I think. They are going to take us away tonight anyway, but she is so very sick, the old lady. Perhaps you can help her."

I went to her barrack immediately. I knew well *Madame la Générale*, the tall old lady with white hair, small face, determined mouth and commanding manner. She had been very active in Red Cross work. *Madame la Générale* was the mother-in-law of General Sosnkowski, the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armies, whose headquarters were in London. The litter on which she lay was filthy and crawling with vermin. I knelt by the old lady whose face displayed pride even in misery.

"Don't come near me, my dear," she said. "Don't. I stink so horribly."

Startled by these words, I asked *Madame la Générale* what was wrong with her.

"Two heart attacks in the last three days," she explained matter-of-factly, "and dysentery."

I scurried around looking for a stretcher and someone to help me carry the sick woman to Barrack 2. If she and her companion could be released, they might go to Milanówek where they had relatives. I asked *Madame la Générale* what she wanted. In a quiet, weak voice she answered: "What I'd like most, my child, is to have a bath."

We managed to secure a release from the camp for her and for her companion. We laid her on the stretcher cautiously and prepared her, as best we could, for the trip.

While all this was going on, Zofia waited for me in the same place where I had found her. When I returned, she took me in her arms, and I burst out crying.

"Where is your mother?" I stammered, wiping off the tears.

"She is sick," Zofia said and led me to where her mother lay on the floor with a coat, rolled into a pillow, under her head. She was as beautiful as usual. She pressed my hand lightly, and I saw tears gather in the corners of her tired eyes. I kissed her hand.

"Where, do you think, they will deport us?" Zofia asked.

"Zofia, do you have any relatives or friends that live around here, with whom you could stay?" I inquired in response.

"Yes, in Komorow. But they won't let us leave."

It was my lucky day. I managed to have Zofia and her mother transferred to Barrack 2, before they were released to go to Komorow. Zofia pointed to a young man with his arm in a sling.

"Can't you help him, too?" she said. "He is a doctor."

The man seemed well enough, and I feared he would never pass the Medical Commission or fool the hawk-eyed guards at the gate.

"My name is Rodynchoski," he introduced himself. "I am a surgeon."

"Of course you are," I answered mechanically. He looked puzzled.

"Why do you say so?"

"I used to know a Dr. Rodynchoski, a surgeon,"—and I swallowed hard at the memory of my superior officer whom I loved and trusted as no one else in the world—"at the Uyazdov Hospital I used to work for him. He... he was a wonderful man."

"General Christopher," said the young man softly. "He is my uncle."

"I'll help you," I declared. But I wondered how I thought it over for a while. Then I looked at the young surgeon. "Milk?" I suggested. "All right," he smiled back. "If you think that will fool them."

Surreptitiously, with the use of a hypodermic needle brought in by one of the "outside nurses," I administered an injection of condensed milk—as there was no fresh milk—and prayed fervently.

In a very short time the young doctor's face became flushed with high fever, his eyes were dimmed and he grew delirious. For a moment I was worried, but it worked. He was given a medical release, and with Zofia and her mother joined the transport going to Komorow hospital.

Zofia kissed me warmly. While waiting for the last formalities at the gate, she spoke with some effort. "Perhaps you'll see my Voytek here, Aneri. Who knows, they might bring him here. They would then deport him to Germany. But if you should see my boy, please do give him my blessing and beg of him to remain as staunch a Pole as he has been so far, no matter what happens. And tell him that I loved him more than anything or anyone else in the world, and that I am proud of him for serving his country well."

Thus we parted. I had known Zofia only for a few weeks. I never saw her again, nor did I see her son, Voytek. But people like Zofia do not ever die entirely. There is always something of them that goes on living, even after death. It was astonishing, I thought while I was walking back to the barracks from the gate, that I had never known before the Uprising how comparatively many there are who never die completely.

The following morning I reported at Barrack 4, where I was welcomed by Dr. Balinska, a wonderful woman, efficient and brave, and such an excellent physician that even Dr. Koenig deferred to her. That day Dr. Pump worked there, too.

I was to examine girls and women who had been raped and report on their cases. It was new to me, this side of the

human tragedy. The first girl to come up was sixteen. She was tall and slender. She burst out crying and I could not calm her. She sobbed so hysterically that Dr. Pump left his room and came in to see what was the matter with the patient. The girl stood before us, naked, her body covered with scratches and blood, her thighs torn in ribbons of flesh.

"Where do you come from?" I asked gently.

"Filtrowa Street," she cried.

Little by little I pried out her story. Her house had been burned and all the inhabitants forced out of their shelters by German grenades. She was with her mother. The Germans first searched everybody, then they attacked several women and even children. Six men abused the girl. When her mother shook off her own assailants and flew to her child's defense, they killed her before her daughter.

We stood there numb with horror. Pump swore under his breath. Yet he had seen more than one such case since he had come to work at the camp.

"Examine her and write a report," he told me curtly. He turned around and went back to his room. He sent her some milk and fresh rolls.

I examined sixteen cases that day, and all the time I was haunted by the fearful thought that my own little girl might be brought to the camp ill, hysterical, with her soul so bruised that it would not easily if ever heal, and with a body mauled and torn by hateful hands. From that day on I lay awake nights, tormented by fears about Barbarka.

Among the sixteen women I had examined there was a thirteen-year-old with her twenty-nine-year-old mother, who was in the fourth month of pregnancy. They were both so sick that there was nothing we could do to save them. They both died on the same day. Before the mother died, we took down a statement from her that both she and the little girl had been raped by several men in suc-

cession. The Gestapo officer present made the dying woman say that the assailants had been Ukrainians, not Germans. Whenever possible, the Gestapo tried to shove onto the shoulders of the Ukrainians or General Vlasov's Cossacks, who served with the Germans and whose record was very bad indeed, the responsibility for crimes committed by the Nazis themselves.

After the woman and her child had been buried in an unmarked grave at the far end of the camp, all her papers and my report were taken away. I could not remember the name of the victims, and was afraid to ask Dr. Pump for it. One day, he unexpectedly came to Dr. Balnska of Barrack 4.

"That woman, you know," he said, "the one who died with her daughter—her name was Janina Kowalska. She was from 21 Miodowa Street in Warsaw."

Dr. Balnska looked at him surprised, yet grateful. Dr. Pump did not look at her. His eyes fixed on the floor, he finished lamely "I thought you might want to know that you might want to remember."

In the morning a new transport arrived. Loudly I called out Barbarka's name, hoping to hear her voice answering me from the throng dumped out of the boxcars. But Barbarka did not come.

"Do you know anything about the mid-city?" I kept asking the new arrivals.

"Sikorski Avenue is still in our hands, don't worry," an exhausted voice tried to reassure me.

There was a small elevation some forty yards away from Gate 14, commanding a good view, and I decided to make this my headquarters. It was some days later, on September 18th, that I went there about noon to wait for transports from Warsaw. I sat down on the sand. A man joined me shortly. He had a small parcel in his hand.

"Are you waiting for the transports?" he asked.

I nodded

"And you?"

"I'll be here until late," he told me. "My wife and youngsters used to live in Praga, but I had word that they had gone to the mid-city in the very first days of the fighting. If they're alive at all, they should be brought here, I figure."

"I'm waiting for my daughter," I told him. "She was in the mid-city, too, like your family."

From afar dull detonations of cannon fire reached our ears.

"Those must be Soviet," the man cocked his head to hear better. "Perhaps they are in Powisle already?"

"They weren't there two weeks ago," I said grimly. "If they had been, I wouldn't be here."

"Listen," he said. "Planes!"

The heavy drone was coming our way, and we knew it was not one plane or two or three or four, but many, many of them, flying in formation, and very high. We tilted back our heads, and looked in the direction of the sun.

"No use wasting your eyes," my companion, whose name was Stanislaw, grumbled. "The sun is in the way. Besides, what do you expect on this goodly forty-ninth day of the Uprising? We rejoiced a few days ago when Soviet planes played at dropping some supplies for the Home Army. None of us knew then that they were no good. Dropped without parachutes, the supplies were pulverized in landing. Much good they did us. And what do you expect now, will you tell me?"

"The Americans," I answered without hesitation, shielding my smarting eyes.

"The Americans!" Mr Stanislaw snorted.

And then the roar of many powerful motors drowned our words and made our heads spin. Mr. Stanislaw

grabbed my hand and squeezed it till it hurt. He looked up toward the silver cloud of planes, coming lower now, in formations of seven.

"Good Lord!" he shouted. "Look, just look!"

The planes were American. They went on toward Warsaw, but already black puffs emitted by German anti-aircraft began breaking around them. Then, before our very eyes, the small shapes of the parachutes detached themselves from the planes, opening as they descended. At first there were dozens, then hundreds, then, it seemed, thousands of them. Some were white, some dark.

A few German trucks tore past the camp, toward Warsaw, and my heart pained at the thought that they might get some of the American supplies. It looked to us as though many of the parachutes had landed ahead of their schedule, not over Warsaw, but over the suburban small town of Wlochy. The German lorries roared down the road. Shortly we heard the yapping of machine guns, too, without knowing at whom they were shooting.

Three American planes burst out in flames now. We watched them go down in black trails of smoke. Then we saw the crews bail out. I prayed hard that their chutes would open well and that they would land safely. I held my fists clenched tight till the knuckles whitened. Mr. Stanislaw stood by me, and followed with his eyes the fall of the burning planes. He cried unashamedly, noisily, like a child.

The formations flew on, eastward, but still there were hundreds of parachutes in the air, swaying with the wind, coming down gently to earth. It was impossible to see from our distance what the parachutes were bringing. And then we saw the snake of the transport train approaching the camp.

We went to the gate for the arrival of the new trainload from Warsaw. There were over three thousand people in that transport, and the unloading lasted almost two hours.

I tried to peer into each one of the three thousand faces that filed through the gate. Barbarka was not among them. Finally the hinges of the gate squeaked loudly and the doors closed.

Another transport came. Again we could find neither Barbarka nor Mr Stanislaw's family. On the other side of the train I heard a German gendarme fire three shots. Probably someone had tried stupidly to run away. Later, alongside the tracks, I saw a woman's body with a bullet wound in her back. She lay with her face down, her arms outstretched. The small body of a boy was curled up at her feet.

That day I saw German trucks bringing into the camp a part of the supplies from the American planes that had apparently fallen either in Piastow or in Wlochy, a few miles beyond the reach of the Home Army in Warsaw. I also saw a truck carrying some airmen in leather jackets and helmets, with their hands behind their backs, but the vehicle passed by too quickly for me to count the number of prisoners it held. But I felt sure that they were Americans.

The next day Soviet planes bombarded the camp. A single German was killed and seventy-two Polish women from Warsaw. The success of the Soviet effort, from our point of view, seemed very questionable. We could not understand the wisdom of bombing an objective which was by this time well known as a distribution center for the non-combatant population of the capital.

The event provided a heyday for the German propaganda experts. They sent a car with a loudspeaker through the length and breadth of the camp to make sure that everybody heard their message. The speech they fed us was short and to the point.

"The Poles' choice of allies has never failed to amaze us," was the way the broadcast opened. "Here you threw yourselves into the arms of England, America and Com-

munist Russia, and what did you get out of it? Betrayal and death. Even today your so-called allies have killed over seventy of you. Forever do they drive you on and on to pull their chestnuts out of the fire with your bare hands. They let you fight alone and die.

"You are fools, and there can be neither sympathy nor pity for those who perish because of their folly. But we are sorry, deeply sorry, for these little children of yours who will curse your name one day for having condemned them in their innocence to hell."

The short speech was followed by music and Polish military songs. The truck with the loudspeaker moved on to the next stop, where it started all over again.

"The Poles' choice of allies has never failed to amaze us. . . ."

The Germans ordered an enormous grave dug for the victims of the Soviet bombing of the camp. The seventy-two women were buried in it. And then they erected a huge cross, the only one they had ever deemed fit to put on a Polish grave. They attached a large sign to it, for all to see

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF AN UNHAPPY PEOPLE

DECEIVED BY ENGLAND

SOVIET BOMBS BROUGHT AN END TO THEIR SUFFERING

People stopped and stared at the sign. Then they resumed their weary rounds on the road to Calvary.

THREE WEEKS HAD passed since I had lost Barbarka, and all my efforts to find her were so far in vain.

A transport of sixty-three hundred people arrived at the camp late in the afternoon of September 22nd. The deportees were in a terrible state. The train had been stalled between Warsaw and Pruszkow for two whole days, during which the people had not been permitted to leave their cattle cars. Suffocating in the tightly packed and filthy boxes on wheels, chilled by cold at night, many died, others arrived in a dying condition.

It was raining heavily. Before the transport was unloaded, night fell. I joined my voice to the many anguished ones calling out in the dark the names of their dearest ones. Once more my search for Barbarka was fruitless.

The guards barked at the frightened mass of deportees huddling under the trees near the gate to seek some shelter from the rain. There were so many stretcher cases that by eleven o'clock that night there were no more wagons left to cart them to Barrack 5. I bent down and picked up the nearest stretcher.

"Where are you taking me?" a plaintive voice moaned. "I don't want to go anywhere. Mother, oh, mother, please."

I pulled out my flashlight. The girl on the stretcher was delirious. She was dressed in a coat and covered with a warm blanket. They had obviously carried her out that way from the cellar of her destroyed house.

It took me and a helper an hour to get to Barrack 2. The German guard there did not object to my bringing the girl in, although this was the wrong barrack. We laid the stretcher with the girl by the wall, and ran back to Gate

14 for the next case. It was still pouring and we were soaked through. My mouth felt dry and my head feverish. But there was not much time to think of such things, not even time to pity those who lay in the mud, under the falling curtain of rain, waiting for our help.

All night we carried them from the gate to the barrack, from the gate to the barrack. The smell of blood was in our nostrils. The sight was unbelievable. People were lying on the floor, their eyes bright with fever, their bandages, long unchanged, caked with blood and pus. Many were too exhausted to drive away the big blue-green flies which clustered around their wounds, eyes and even open mouths.

Dr. Janusz moved among the diseased with a long white sheet of paper and kept writing on it one name after another, assigning them to the various hospitals in the vicinity. Almost every day many cases would be sent from our camp to these hospitals. How they managed there God only knew.

The death rate in Barrack 2 that day was ten per cent. I was surprised it was so small.

I had found a moment to go over to the wall and look at the stretcher with the delirious young girl. She was still unconscious and moaning. She tried to raise herself and then she fell back on the stretcher, unable to move.

I stood over her and she focused her eyes on me for a second. She quieted down, and seemed normal and conscious again.

"Please take my jacket off," she begged. "It hurts me, here, under my arms."

Then she closed her eyes, as I knelt by the stretcher.

"Don't touch her," a woman warned me sharply.

"Why?"

"She's crazy."

"We are all crazy," I answered.

I pulled off the blanket which was wrapped tight around

the girl, and bared her legs. I was struck first by the swarms of maggots and vermin. Then I saw that the girl's legs were furrowed with ugly wounds and gashes, and that her ankles and feet were skinless and swollen and putrid. I covered her again. The girl, tossing in pain, did not notice my brief examination.

I then unbuttoned her coat. There was a small ribbon on her blouse. The ribbon was red and white, the Order of the Cross of Valor. I stared at the girl with a new feeling of kinship. She was from the Home Army. But who was she and where from?

Dr. Gregory was the man to see at once. I burst into Barrack 8. Gregory was sitting there, smoking a cigarette casually, too casually, it seemed to me. I looked around. The Gestapo chief was paying a little visit to Barrack 8. I suppressed the exciting news. We waited, talking about the weather and my cold. Finally the Gestapo-man left.

"I found a girl in Barrack 2, one of ours. It's a dreadful case," I said breathlessly. "I must bring her here. And, please, Gregory, get a clean sheet somewhere and plenty of hot water. It is an exceptional case, I tell you. We must save her."

Dr. Gregory nodded his scarecrow head.

"All right. Bring her in," he said curtly.

I myself wrote out the *Zettel* (order) directing the girl to the "hospital" which Barrack 8 was supposed to be. I asked Maria, the nurse, to help me carry the girl from Barrack 2 to Barrack 8.

Dr. Gregory came over to the stretcher we had brought. Suddenly, I saw the nonchalance wither on his face. He grew pale, terribly pale, as he looked at the girl. The hard bones of his tight jaws stood out on his face. He wrung his hands till I saw his knuckles get as white as his face. Then, as he was still looking at the girl, tears began to roll down his cheeks. A terrible curse escaped from his lips. He just stood there and looked. The girl was still unconscious.

"Olenka, Olenka," Gregory whispered "Olenka," and his voice broke again.

Then he turned to me. I was taken aback by the deadly quiet of his face.

"You have some morphine, haven't you?"

I handed him whatever I had.

"You . . . know her?" I asked. My throat was dry.

Gregory waited a brief moment before he turned to answer me. When he did, I saw his mouth twitch. But his voice was calm. "She is my sister," he answered, and went back to work. He washed Olenka's body. I was seized by a violent fit of nausea, unable to stand the sight of her wounds and of the worms swarming over her slim, young body. Her ribs were broken, and she had suffered bad burns, too.

Olenka breathed heavily. She must have been in great pain, despite the morphine. She tossed feverishly and kept calling, "Mother, mother!"

Gregory worked swiftly, carefully. He applied compresses to the swollen knees of the girl. He covered each wound with a piece of linen soaked in limewater, and spread a salve on the burns.

I took Olenka's clothes and went out to burn them. The Germans drew back in disgust from the heap of garments filthy with worms. They muttered something about Polish filth.

The only thing of Olenka's we kept was her military decoration. We worked on her in complete silence for over an hour. Gregory's mouth was a straight, thin line, and his eyes were hard.

Wrapped in white dressings, Olenka lay on the stretcher. I stayed with her while Dr. Gregory went off on mysterious errands. He returned with a release for Olenka. She was assigned to one of the hospitals outside of the camp. He had a pass for himself, too, for the town of Pruszkow, and two passes for two stretcher-bearers, a couple of boys who

had been eagerly looking for an opportunity to get out of the camp.

Without a word, Gregory nodded to them, and the bearers picked up the stretcher. The doctor turned to me then, speaking for the first time since he told me that Olenka was his sister.

"Thank you," he said. And the little procession left the camp.

During the three months of its existence, over five hundred thousand people passed through the Pruszkow Camp, established in the beginning of August for the evicted inhabitants of war-torn Warsaw in the vast grounds of former railroad yards and workshops. While I was there, the average daily number of inmates was around eighteen thousand. To care for this multitude, in addition to the small group of Polish doctors and nurses, there were about six hundred women from the vicinity of the camp who had volunteered to help and had received German permission to do so. Not all of them could come regularly, and there were days when there would be no more than one hundred of them on hand.

To be released from the camp, one had to be certified as sick and be taken to Barrack 2, where Dr. Koenig, the medical head, presided. Dr. Koenig was not a bad man, as Germans go. He behaved quite decently, and sometimes even closed his eyes to whatever the Polish nurses were doing. Koenig liked to drink and the Underground workers, active at Pruszkow, did not discourage him from his favorite pastime.

A long line of nurses filed by his table every day, bringing lists of the disabled. Sometimes Koenig would sign these barrack lists without inspecting them too closely, sometimes he would insist on checking personally every case. Eventually the lists with Koenig's signature would go to the Green Car for Gestapo approval.

There were ten members of the Underground active within the camp. Nine of them were in the Red Cross. The tenth, a man, bought his freedom in the camp by heavily bribing the Germans, who permitted him to stay there in the belief that he was waiting for his family to come from Warsaw.

The frame guardhouse near Gate 14, where a small room was reserved for the Polish nurses on duty during the arrival of transports, served the ends of the Underground in many ways. The white fence enclosing the latrine on the side of the guardhouse had two removable pickets, and often at night we would smuggle people out of the camp that way. On the other side, they would be picked up by the Zonobs, a family living nearby whose boundless zeal helped the fugitives to get to safety.

There was another way in which the guardhouse proved unwittingly valuable to us. The workers from the outside who were employed at the camp by the Germans came each evening, on their way home, to the window of the guardhouse to present their passes and have them stamped. After this, they would lend us their garments and their cards, enabling prisoners to leave the camp in peace. In that way we smuggled out about a thousand men of the Home Army.

The workers involved in this scheme were all members of the Underground from Pruszkow and vicinity. There were seventeen of them. By giving us their cards, they exposed both themselves and their families to extreme danger. But there had been only one case when the ruse failed to work.

The German guard who was checking the passes was drunk that night. A Home Army man whom we were helping to escape became nervous as he handed over the pass card, arousing the German's suspicions. He looked at the man carefully.

"No," he said. "You aren't the same fellow as on the pass card. You've got a different sort of face."

"Nonsense!" the other workers spoke up. "You talk as if you did not know him. Why, Hans, you see him every day passing here."

"No, he isn't like himself," the drunkard insisted.

It might have all ended amicably, but the Home Army man, afraid of capture and of exposing the worker who had given him his card, knocked down the German and began to run. It happened so quickly that before anyone knew what was happening the man was quite far away. But he had chosen a most dangerous course, across an open field. He zigzagged, running, and the first bullets missed him, but when the pursuing Germans got closer they shot him dead.

The goggle-eyed drunkard bragged aloud about how smart he was. Then the killers came back to look for the pass card the man had presented. But there was no pass card. When the German had slumped down after the knockout blow, he had dropped the card, and one of the nurses had immediately picked it up from the ground. Without waiting for the outcome of the chase, she had found the owner of the card and returned it to him. Thus there was no one among the workers waiting to get out through Gate 14 who did not possess his own identity papers. The German gendarme claimed that the dead man had snatched the card from his hand, and he could not remember the name of the card's owner. In the melee, several others escaped from a transport which had arrived just then.

We did what we could to save as many people as possible from the dreadful fate of deportation to Germany or death. Special units of the Home Army attacked and released some of the transports on their way to Germany. In two of these transports alone there were over five thou-

sand young men and women selected for slave labor; they were set free and safely hidden in the forests.

One transport after another was arriving from Warsaw, where the Germans were pushing fast toward the center of the city. It was dawning when I came to the gate to look for Barbarka among the newcomers. I did not find her, but I heard there were some refugees from the Uyazdov Hospital which was to have been my hospital. Excited and tearful, I went in quest of people who might know what had happened to General Christopher. I came across Dr. Lesniak, General Christopher's assistant, and he told me their story.

The Uyazdov Hospital had been burned in the first days of the Uprising. It was moved then to Pulawska Street, to a large apartment house, and it was there that the Germans had taken him and his companions.

"Did you manage to evacuate all the wounded?" I asked.

Dr. Lesniak looked at me with bloodshot eyes.

"Not the typhus and the dysentery cases," he said grimly. "The ward for the contagious diseases was on the street floor of that building on Pulawska Street. The Germans learned about it. They ordered us out. A few of them put on masks. They brought some cans of gasoline or something like that, and told us that these were the best doctors for this sort of disease. They sprayed the ward and the sickbeds with the inflammable fluid. Then they set fire to the ward."

Involuntarily I started, letting out an exclamation of incredulity. Dr. Lesniak looked at me again.

"I know, I know," he said in a very tired voice. "You don't believe it. No one will perhaps. Some people can't. But I swear to you, I swear on all that's holy and sacred and worth loving, that it happened on Pulawska Street, and that I speak the truth."

About eighty per cent of the people in the transports

that had arrived during the night were either badly wounded or very sick. All looked like skeletons. Those of us who were waiting for their families to come out of Warsaw dreaded the thought of finding them in a similar condition, half-alive.

"Are you from Skorupki Street, perhaps?" I asked one woman, helping her up.

"No. I am from Krakowskie. But that woman, I think, is from Skorupki Street," and she pointed to an energetic-looking person sitting on some bedding.

"Are you from Skorupki Street?" I asked, and felt as if my heart would stop beating.

"Five Skorupki Street, madame," the woman answered politely.

"No. 5. Did you perhaps know Dr. Gorska from No. 3?"

"Of course. Know her and her family. We were bombed out together some three weeks ago."

Three weeks! I calculated quickly. That was a few days after I had sent Barbarka to a "safe place," to stay with Dr. Gorska.

"How was it?" I asked. I tried to keep my voice calm. The woman did not know I was inquiring for my only child. I did not want her to know. I did not want to be fed on false optimism.

"Well, madame, on September 8th we all had to move to the cellar of the house at 3 Skorupki Street. It was crowded to overflowing, but still we managed. We got our water from Hoza Street. The hospital was not far, either, and there was a field kitchen, and we were getting a bit of food there, every day.

"Then, on September 10th, three bombs crashed on the house. It had been half-destroyed before, anyway. The cellar was ruined, too. Half of the people there did not come out alive. My patroness, Saint Agnes, must have taken care of me, her poor servant. I had to climb over piles of bodies to get out."

As she was describing the scene, I could see her pushing the dead aside to make her way toward the door of the cellar. I could see her climbing over the pile of corpses, through warm, oozing blood. And Barbarka was there, too.

"And Dr. Gorska? Did she survive?"

"Oh, yes. She is all right. And so is her husband and her son. None of them had been hurt. They even managed to save their dog. They went to some friends on Marszałkowska Street. But that house, too, burned down the very next day, I hear, and they had to move on."

"And do you remember, by any chance? . . ." I hesitated, and told myself that now was the time not to cry, but to make my voice sound very casual, almost indifferent. "Do you perhaps remember a little girl that was staying with the Gorskis? A blond girl with pigtails? She had a brown fur coat. Was she saved, too?"

The woman moved, a little impatiently.

"I don't remember her," she said, "but I know that the Gorskis had no one with them when they moved to Marszałkowska Street. That girl must have been killed under the debris. So many died there."

She smoothed her skirt and settled herself more comfortably on her bedding. There was a long silence. Not hearing any more questions, the woman looked up at me. I tried to turn away. But it was too late. She seized my hand.

"What is it?" she cried. "What did I say now?"

"No, nothing." I found it difficult to speak. "Nothing . . . It's just that . . . that little girl I was asking you about . . . is my daughter."

The woman jumped up, her eyes wide and scared, and moved away from me.

It was late in the afternoon, and after a day of strenuous preparations I was about to smuggle out, with a departing

transport, two Home Army men and two nurses from their unit who had come with them. Hanka, a trusted member of our group in the camp, was leading one of the men, I was taking care of the other. Both of them simulated sickness. The girls were on their own, with the others of the transport.

In front of me an old woman was dragging her feet painfully, clumsily. She carried a small bundle, and the long string with which it had been tied trailed after her. It was the very thing to arouse the German sense of humor and playfulness. One of the guards pulled hard at the trailing string, and tossed the small bundle up in the air. It came down in a shower of small things out of the torn wrapping. Some linen, and a big prayer book filled with holy pictures which had been stuck between the pages, which now fluttered in the air before they were scattered on the ground. The guards laughed, as the sick old woman stood there crying helplessly, unable to bend down and gather her pitiful belongings. She begged us to help her, but I could not risk stopping with the man I was leading, and went on. Behind me, one of the two nurses we were smuggling out of the camp could not bear the scene. She stepped out of the ranks and knelt down to help the old woman with her poor relics. The German kicked the girl hard. She fell on the ground, moaning.

"Please don't," I heard Hanka's voice entreating the guard.

But it was too late. The soldier whom she was leading bounced forward and hit the German. They were at one another's throats before we realized what was happening. Then they rolled on the ground. The crowd stood still and tense. A few armed men moved slowly forward, where the fight was going on. A salvo of gunfire followed. Someone shouted. Someone fell. Others withdrew. As it was growing dark, we could not see very clearly what was going on.

"Please help the girl," the man who was with me said. "Please do something. She's his wife"

I sent the man back to the barrack, and went over to the girl. She was still slumped on the ground, unconscious and bleeding.

"Hanka, help me!" I called. "Or they'll kill her"

A German officer, known as the "Frenchman" because he had served in the Foreign Legion, saved us then. But the girl's husband remained there, in the middle of the road to the gate. While he was fighting his wife's assailant, another German had come up from the back and split his head wide open with the butt of his gun. His body was still there when the sound of a loud horn pierced our ears, and a car rolled in. It was heavily escorted. Obviously, an important personage was arriving. The "Frenchman" went over to the car, which came to a stop in front of the dead man sprawling across the road. Someone in a gold-braided uniform got out of the car. The Germans all sprang to attention. We were too far away to hear what the high-ranking visitor was saying but he was obviously angry, as he pointed at the body. Two gendarmes ran up immediately with a stretcher, and took the corpse away.

The car passed on and halted in front of Barrack 2. Some German officers got out first.

"Look! A general!" an awed whisper was heard in our group.

Then, two officers of the Home Army got out of the car. Their red-and-white armbands could be seen even from a distance. And they were both blindfolded.

A deep sigh reverberated in the group watching the car closely. We knew what blindfolds meant for Home Army soldiers: execution. There had been many executions at the camp already. On September 12th, five soldiers of the Home Army and three officers had been shot by the Germans, who scanned the barracks carefully every day

to weed out all those whom they suspected of being "bandits" Such marked men they would take to a place only some five hundred yards from Gate 14, where they shot them and dumped their bullet-ridden bodies in a deep ditch

The German general's aide took the blindfolds off the Home Army officers! Another sigh swayed our crowd, a sigh of relief. They were not going to be shot then, not now, anyway.

From Barrack 2 the Medical Commission, led by Dr Koenig, appeared. It was joined by some Gestapo officers whom I had never seen before. Also present was Dr Kielbasinska, the fat-rumped collaborationist, who was dreaded throughout the camp. They all saluted the two Home Army officers. It was baffling, and none of us could understand it at all.

The whole group left in the direction of Barrack 7.

"Don't look. It's awful," Dr Gregory's dull voice addressed me from behind. I wheeled around.

"What is it, Gregory," I pleaded. "I don't understand it."

"They are from Mokotow."

"But what are they doing here?"

"It is September 25th today," Dr Gregory announced. "You may as well remember this date. They are negotiating the surrender of Mokotow."

The large district of Mokotow, commanded by "Karol," was vital strategically, and we knew that large forces of the Home Army had been gathered there. The surrender of Mokotow could mean but one thing: the end of the Uprising. Our hearts shrank within us at the very thought. The mechanized power of the Germans and the Soviet silence were bringing Warsaw to her knees.

"But why, why did they bring these two here?"

"To inspect the camp before they surrender," Gregory answered bitterly "To see where the soldiers will be quartered. It's clear the Germans have given up their policy of treating us as 'bandits' and shooting Home Army men on sight."

"After fifty-six days," Hanka whispered.

But Mokotow did not actually surrender until two days later, on September 27th. From that day on, the road to Pruszkow was alive with long streams of deportees, who were marched between muzzles of machine guns. Occasionally, the Germans, short of trains, would requisition peasant carts for transport. Sometimes German lorries would bring in a carload of refugees.

The churches along the road from Warsaw, and in the neighborhood of Pruszkow, kept their doors open twenty-four hours a day, and they had the Blessed Sacrament exposed at the main altar. Everybody prayed fervently in those days, begging the Almighty for mercy. There was nothing left for us to do, but to pray. All the misery and horror I had seen in the camp paled with the appearance of the first batches of civilians to arrive from Mokotow.

The day the German loud-speakers announced triumphantly the news of Mokotow's surrender, there came two transports of gassed civilians. Those who had tried to get from Mokotow to the center of Warsaw through the sewers were trapped there by poison gas which the Germans had used to cut off their only road of escape.

Almost six thousand people from Mokotow came that day, on September 27th. Many of them were blind. Their faces were swollen, and so were their arms and legs. No more than a few hundred could open the puffy lids of their eyes.

Among these stumbling shadows, unseeing and unhearing, I recognized Mr. Wroblewski, a shoemaker, whom I knew well, as all my shoes used to come from his shop.

Wroblewski could not open his eyes at all. Under his forehead, where his eyes had been, there was now a purplish roll of flesh and skin.

"Mr Wroblewski," I called. "It's I, Irena Bytniewska. What's happened to you?"

The shoemaker slowly turned toward me his blind and disfigured head, and greeted me listlessly.

"We tried to get to the center of the city from our house, my wife and myself," he said. "Our house burned down. We hoped perhaps we could save something from our mid-city store at least. So we decided to go there. The Home Army let us leave Mokotow by way of the sewers. I had gone through them once before. The sewers there aren't as bad as in other parts of the city. Most of the time they are quite wide, and one can bear going through them even though it's such a long way. My wife was with me. Nearly a hundred and fifty people were in the party with us. And then, at a certain place, I do not know where it was, we began to choke. People began to scream. I think I shouted, too. But then I couldn't hear anything any more. My wife fell. I tried to drag her after me, but could not. People dropped one after another. It was some dreadful gas; it attacks your eyes. You begin to weep copiously, and soon you see nothing. Nothing at all. Five of us got out of the sewers. My wife I left there. My wife, and a hundred and forty others."

Wroblewski was sitting with his head low, his hand over his eyes, as if the light hurt him, too. Hundreds of people sat that same way. The German physicians examining these helpless human puppets tried to pry open their swollen lids and look at the victim's pupils, but in vain.

The Gestapo officers went around with the doctors. They made no comment, but ordered all the people from Mokotow out of the camp quickly. Special trains were

brought in to remove them, trains made up of regular passenger cars, with German nurses aboard. A few of our camp nurses were ordered to accompany the transport of the blinded gas casualties. We never learned what became of them.

HEAVY FALLS OF SMOKE hung over Warsaw, but we could still hear that the city was fighting even after the surrender of Mokotow. And then, on September 29th, a car drew up at the camp's gate and three Home Army officers, with their conspicuous red-and-white arm-bands, got out of it. They were taken to Barrack 7, just like the two officers from Mokotow four days earlier.

"Who are they?" we wondered, "and what does it all mean?"

A few hours after they left, the German loud-speakers blared forth again. "The district of Zoliborz has surrendered. The rebels will be recognized as 'patriots' and be treated as prisoners of war."

We thanked God for that. Zoliborz, situated on the left bank of the Vistula beyond the district of the Old Town, had been one of the newest and finest quarters of the capital. It included small villas set in gardens, massive modern cooperative houses and settlements for workers, a newfangled impressionistic theatre and progressive schools.

Dr Gregory was moping in his corner of Barrack 8. The news of the surrender first of Mokotow and then of Zoliborz came as heavy blows to him.

"It might be another of their damn tricks, you know," he tried to cheer me up. "Perhaps it's not true, after all. We have not had any transports of Home Army men so far, have we?"

"No. Not yet."

That night our group of nurses held an informal council of war. Janina, the interpreter, had called us together. As usual, she had the best information.

"The Home Army will be quartered in Barrack 7. How about collecting some money, those of us who have any, that is, and getting some cigarettes and apples for the boys?" she suggested.

The idea was approved by all wholeheartedly. A few thousand zlotys were collected on the spot and three nurses were assigned to make the purchases. Janina and Maria were to get the cigarettes. Hanka promised to furnish the apples, claiming that she had a way of smuggling in a quantity of them.

We had to work hard that day and the one following to slip through the gate, in small bundles, our provisions for the expected boys of the Home Army. We collected inside the camp several thousand cigarettes and two large sacks of apples.

Gate 14 swung open slowly after midnight. A freight train, comprising eighteen cars, pulled in. Dr. Gregory and I were on watch. "For repairs or something," I ventured a guess.

Gregory squeezed my hand and put a warning finger to his lips. His eyes alertly followed the train. The cars, unlike those used by the Germans for ordinary transports, were not open. Their small windows were wired. On top of each car rode a German gendarme, heavily armed.

"Home Army?" I whispered very gently in Gregory's ear. He nodded, his eyes still on the train. It would have been imprudent to approach that train at night. We sat down close to the wall, on the grass, and stayed there until dawn, waiting patiently for the unloading of the cars.

It was after six when the Germans began to unload them. I stood with my back against a tree, and watched our boys leave the cars one by one, in an orderly, unhurried, quiet manner. They looked worn-out and miserable, but they were clean and most properly dressed. I remembered well how careful our men used to be about their

clothes and general appearance. Certainly they even now looked like soldiers.

Upon leaving their cars, they gathered in regular ranks immediately and stood in formation. They did not look around. Gregory and I counted about a thousand Home Army men in that first transport. They carried out their own wounded from one of the cars. Some were on stretchers, others on crutches. Two of the cars had brought women, both soldiers and nurses. I stood looking at them, holding on tight to the rough bark of the tree.

"Get out of here, if you want to bawl like an idiot," Gregory barked at me.

I had not been aware that I was crying. Gregory counted forty-two officers among the prisoners. Covered by a heavy cordon of Germans, lined along the entire road from the gate to Barrack 7, the Home Army prisoners marched under the command of their officers. The Germans saluted. A German car followed the march, and a man with a moving-picture camera perched on it kept grinding his machine. Let the world see how humanely, how gallantly the Reich was treating the Polish "bandits" after all!

It was hard to get to Barrack 7 to bring food or cigarettes for our soldiers. We watched for the changes of the guards, and tried to find one that would not mind earning a bit of money the easy way. About noon that day we found the right man. Those of us who had seen how poorly and thinly clad our soldiers were reported it to the others, and soon seven "outside" nurses were scouring the town for some decent clothes for the soldiers. The people of Pruszkow responded handsomely. All day long, while the "unseeing" German soldier was on guard, we kept smuggling into Barrack 7 shirts, sweaters, suits, underwear, canteens and jugs, toothbrushes, soap, blankets, food and medicine.

The sick and the wounded and the Home Army women were quartered in Barrack 8 into which no one was al-

lowed on the first day. But when I tried my luck on the second day, the soldier on guard let me go through, after checking my usual pass.

The wounded boys of the Home Army occupied all the primitive bunks in Dr. Gregory's "hospital" at Barrack 8. As I was looking over the rows of wounded, Dr. Gregory came out of his office and called out loud, addressing himself to the nurses present: "Will one of you please come here for a minute?"

I rushed over quickly, anxious to be the first to reach him. He nodded, without a smile, and led the way into his office. Two men were sitting there, both wounded, a lieutenant and a sergeant. The lieutenant had but one leg. They not only wore Home Army armbands, but were in Polish uniforms.

"She's one of yours, too," Gregory pointed toward me, as he went to work on the lieutenant's stump of a leg.

"Do you know anything about Powisle, about Krybar's Group, Group VIII?" I asked.

"Some of them are still fighting in the center of the city, I think," he answered, obviously overcoming pain. I winced, and he noticed it immediately. "Never mind," he said a little impatiently. "They won't be able to hold out long there. No food, no arms, no ammunition. You know yourself how it is. But we'll come back sometime. You know"—and his voice sounded inspired—"you know what: I still believe we'll win. It's crazy—but I know it. The Uprising won't go to waste. We have learned a lot. We'll fight again, and we'll win."

I stood there, deeply shaken.

"If not for us, then for our children," the sergeant chimed in quietly, without any pose.

I turned on the sergeant who had uttered that short, quiet sentence, and opened my lips to speak out. Then I swallowed hard, and said nothing. The sergeant was eighteen.

That afternoon the second transport of Home Army prisoners from Mokotow was brought in. Then came the third, the fourth and the fifth. They kept them four days at Barrack 7, after which they shipped them off to prisoner-of-war camps in the Reich.

The German loud-speakers boomed again: "The center of the city has fallen into our hands. The Warsaw Uprising is over!"

On October 2nd, in the evening, one more group of Home Army delegates reached the Pruszkow Camp. With our officers I saw Mme. Maria Tarnowska, a representative of the Red Cross. Dressed in a black suit and beret, with knee-high riding boots on, she moved about with her usual brisk efficiency. But her very presence was proof that our High Command had given up the fight. Warsaw had been forced to surrender to the Germans after sixty-three days of fighting.

From then on I lived at Gate 14. We learned that all the inhabitants of Warsaw were to leave the city by October 6th. After that date, the Germans announced, they would shoot on sight all those found in the streets or in the houses. Endless streams of people flowed through Gate 14. Red-eyed and weary, the nurses were there day and night, receiving the transports, and looking for their own families.

It was on October 6th, I believe, that the largest transport of Home Army prisoners of war arrived at the camp. The boys were swaying on their feet from exhaustion, but tried to keep in formation as they passed before the many German officers who had come to see them.

The women of the Home Army marched apart from the men. It had been rumored about the camp that at the last moment all the women of the Home Army had been commissioned as officers by our High Command, so that they would be taken to the *Oflags*, the officers' camps, rather

than to the *Stalags*, where privates were kept and where prisoners were compelled to do hard work

Among the women officers there marched a little girl. She was eight. Word about her had spread like wildfire among us. The woman with whom the little girl marched was her mother, a second lieutenant in the Home Army. The child's father, also an officer, had been wounded badly during the Uprising, and was in the Holy Child Hospital. The girl's rank was not an empty gesture. She had served in the liaison branch and had been decorated with a *Virtuti Militari*, the highest Polish military decoration, an order which neither of her parents had received.

The German officers walked over to the woman and her little girl, those two soldiers of the Home Army that they had fought with all the means at their disposal for sixty-three days. They bent low their tall, elegantly uniformed figures to see the face of the eight-year-old girl. The mother stood stiff, unbending, motionless. The child did not smile. She looked at the tall men gravely, without a word, without a gesture. And then a strange thing happened. The German officers straightened up and stood at attention, saluting the little girl. . . . The column moved on.

An hour later one of the camp nurses, caught while passing cigarettes to Home Army men, was arrested. The next morning, when the remaining prisoners of war were marched from Barrack 7 to be loaded into the boxcars that were to take them to Germany, there was no more saluting. All the men got now was a half-pound of dark bread each.

That night I removed my Red Cross armband, so as not to be accosted by inmates in need of help, and went roaming in the overcrowded Barrack 5. It was cut lengthwise by seven partitions, and I wandered from one to another unhurriedly, looking at people's wasted bodies and worn-out faces.

In the fifth section I stumbled on a woman whose face

seemed familiar. I looked hard. Yes, it was Marysia M, my very good friend, who had been so fond of Barbarka. A crazy hope surged within me perhaps she knew something about my girl. Perhaps Barbarka was alive, after all.

Marysia M looked at me unblinkingly, even when I stood close to her, without recognizing me at all.

"Marysia," I whispered. She knew my voice.

"Irena!" she called. "Irena! You—here?" She looked at me incredulously.

"But Barbarka!" I cried. "They told me that Barbarka had been killed!"

Ever since the woman from Skorupki Street had told me about the bombing that had spared so few, I had been prepared for the news of Barbarka's death. And yet, with the blindness of all those who love, I could not believe what I had not seen with my own eyes.

"What are you talking about, for God's sake?" Marysia shouted irately. "Barbarka's alive! I saw her only yesterday."

I moved my lips, I wanted to say something, to smile, but could not.

The transports from Warsaw were coming in now every half hour, and I haunted the gate with searching eyes in my unrelenting hunt for Barbarka. It began to rain. It would stop for a while, and then it would pour again.

From the latest arrivals we learned that the Soviet planes had bombed the Western Station. Why did they bomb the station now, when it was imperative for the people of Warsaw to get out of the city as quickly as possible? Why could not their planes have come over Warsaw three or two weeks sooner, when it had not yet been too late?

The water dripped from my hair and down my back. The deportees from the transports dragged their leaden feet, and the German guards did not even hurry them on

any longer. Some would sit down in the mud crying. When they refused to budge, the German butts prodded them along.

There was one old man whom no amount of prodding could make go on. He slumped down not far from the Gestapo's Green Car, and reclined there in the mud, holding tenderly a small dog that whimpered in his arms. A German guard went over to the old man. I could not hear his words, but I saw him stretch out his hand to take the little dog away. The man protested and held on tightly to the mongrel. The two pulled at the dog, back and forth, shouting angrily. The dog howled. Other gendarmes found the scene amusing. They formed a circle around the spot, and laughed riotously. Twice the old man fell, badly beaten up by the young gendarme. No one helped him, yet he managed to get up. And still he held the dog. Finally, the German tore the dog out of the man's arms. The poor cur whined and panted for breath. The old man hurled himself against the German again, and caught him by the throat. One of the other gendarmes decided then that it was time to intervene. He walked over quietly, and shot the old man in the head, from the back. Then he slapped his comrade on the shoulder and patted the frightened dog.

The dog growled and whimpered. He tried to bite the German who held him now. Perhaps he did, for suddenly we all saw the gendarme seize the animal by its hind legs and crush its head against the trunk of a tree near by. There was no more whining. The transport moved on.

In the middle of the road, coming from Gate 14, I saw a tall man carrying a bundle. I must have noticed him mainly because there was a little dog running beside him, and I was still filled with the horror of the two useless murders I had seen. The tall man moved uncertainly, looking around in perplexity. His face was swollen and red. I walked over to him, and looked at the bundle he was

carrying. It was a tiny baby, wrapped up in a dirty blanket. It was still breathing. I took them to the barrack with me, to the doctor's office, and unwrapped the infant. The man began to cry.

"Why do you weep?" I asked, more cheerfully than I felt. "The baby will live, I tell you."

The man looked at his child without answering. It lay there on the table, purplish, its wilted, pitiful skin covering its thin body. The infant was two weeks old. It did not know how to drink from a bottle or from a spoon. The mother had been killed by a stray shell the day before, when they were leaving Warsaw for the camp.

How much more helpless men are than women, I thought. I had seen so many women who had lost their husbands and were stranded without money and without clothes with small children, but they never looked as broken-down and helpless as men. Women fought tooth and nail for life, and never gave up the way so many men did.

Vera and another nurse helped me wash the few diapers the man had with him and, eventually, to dispatch him and his baby out of camp. He was very ill, and that facilitated his release.

Back to Gate 14 I went, straining my eyes and my heart in my quest for Barbarka. I found an old woman dying there. I called another nurse, a girl with beautiful luminous eyes, to attend her. The young nurse had no one to wait for; she had received positive information that her whole family had perished.

More and more Germans were hovering near the transports. They were picking out young girls and leading them away, we knew not where. None of them was ever seen again. I kept vigil at the gate.

One transport pulled in, and as the train slowed down, we all ran to meet it. But it did not stop. It passed by us and went on west. A shower of scraps of paper fluttered

in the air, those were messages from the unfortunates on board, giving their names and begging us to notify their relatives. The train then disappeared, leaving all of us with a new hollow feeling. Suppose Barbarka was in that transport, the one that had not stopped? Would they bypass our camp in the future? Would they be sending them to some new places? There was one day, after the surrender of October 2nd, when the Pruszkow Camp had received thirty-six thousand people. How would I ever be able to find my child? These questions added new torments to our old ones.

Hanka was dragging two heavy suitcases and I went over to help her.

"Whose are they?" I asked.

"Two women escaped from the transport. We'll get these to them later," Hanka explained. "They chanced on a kindhearted German who could not resist the prospect of getting a handsome watch for his fiancée. He let them pass under the car, and they got away unnoticed."

Another transport, the twenty-first that day, was coming.

I hid behind a group of German officers who were counting the number of people brought in. Their backs offered some protection from the slashing rain. The train was slowing down, and I prayed that it would stop. It did, and car after car began to spit out the mangled mass of humanity.

Beyond the gate, to the left, where the guard stood with his bayonet fixed, an anxious crowd scanned each face carefully seeking their dearest ones. The first ranks passed, then the next ones, dozens and hundreds of them, and then it seemed like the end. I had strained my eyes all day in vain. But just then a new transport pulled in, a little farther away from the gate, and shortly the first ranks of a new procession of deportees began to appear.

In the steady stream of faces now flowing before me, I found one I knew, Wanda S. I leaned forward eagerly to call to her. But I could not speak. The words would not come out of my mouth. Behind Wanda S., I saw a small, chubby figure, waddling clumsily in an oversized brown fur coat. She trudged on stubbornly, valiantly, without a tear. There were no words in my throat yet I stood there, looking at the child. Wanda was passing by, giving me but an indifferent, unrecognizing glance. I made a gesture and moved forward. But still I could not speak.

Barbarka came quite close to me now. Seeing her so close after these weeks of anguish, I could not move, as if my feet were rooted in the ground.

Barbarka squinted her eyes. She was but a few steps away from me now. She looked at me, and started. She looked again, and then I saw that she did not recognize me, either. Out of my parched throat came one croaking word: "Barbarka!"

And then she was in my unbelieving arms. The words tumbled back into my throat.

"Don't cry, Barbarka," I said. "Don't cry, for I won't be able to bear it if you cry. I tell you, I couldn't stand it. Don't cry, please."

Barbarka did not cry. But from the next rank a man broke out and caught my hands, sobbing aloud, unable to speak a word. It was Pan Yanek, the good friend who had taken Barbarka from our post to the mid-city.

Salt drops of perspiration rolled down from my forehead, into my eyes, into my mouth. Barbarka clung to my hand, loath to let it go even for a moment. She was dressed in my skiing suit and my own heavy shoes. Over this much-too-large outfit she had on my fur coat, and a rain hood on her head. She carried a small bundle strapped to her shoulders like a rucksack, and a small overnight bag in her hand.

The nurse, Stasia, who had befriended me and shared

her litter with me, now offered it to Barbarka, Wanda and Pan Yanek. During the night I would stretch out my hand and touch my child lightly, just to feel that the incredible had happened and that she was there, with me, lying close, breathing deeply in her sleep.

Barbarka stirred and woke up. Wanda did not sleep, nor did Pan Yanek. Yet none of us spoke, none of us hastened to give an account of the days when they had thought I was dead, and when I had mourned Barbarka's death.

Before I could understand the miracle of our reunion I had to listen carefully to what Barbarka said, and to try to imagine and fully comprehend what she had gone through. So I listened avidly to her tale, a quiet tale, for Barbarka had never been an overly emotional child, a tale in which small things were pathetically mixed with happenings of unsurpassed magnitude. She told of the supplies dropped by Soviet planes, and how they were useless because they had fallen without parachutes, how our large post at the Polytechnic Institute had to surrender finally, how she had met a woman who told her about my death, how the house she was in had been destroyed completely by a bomb, and that all she had managed to save were these few things of mine she was wearing, and none of her own. And then she said, "Mummy!" and snuggled still closer to me, and that was the end of the tale.

Dr. Koenig was drunk when I asked him for a medical release for Barbarka the next morning. He pushed back his cap, and laughed merrily.

"*Frau Doctor*, it seems to me I have had to sign more releases for you than for any other nurse in the whole camp. How come?"

"I pick them up dying," I answered tartly.

Koenig laughed again. But he took a card to write the release. I was determined that Barbarka had to leave the camp as soon as possible. For only then would I be free

to move, so as to escape deportation to Germany. I managed to get her out of the camp shortly, and placed her at Yanechka's, in a small town several miles away from Pruszkow.

Then I returned to work, no longer afraid of anything in the world, for I knew Barbarka was safe, and I could not fail her.

IT WAS SO early that the gray of the coming autumn day had not even broken in the dark sky when Dr. Gregory burst into Barrack 5 and rudely awakened me. I was sleeping in my dress, as usual.

"Get up!"

"What's the matter, Gregory? What's happened?"

"You can go to Warsaw, if you want to."

If I want to? Good Lord! What was Gregory saying? Go to Warsaw? He had known how intense was my longing to see the city once more, before the unknown future swallowed up Barbarka and me.

"To Warsaw?" I repeated incredulously.

"Yes, come on." He tugged at my sleeve impatiently. "The Germans are sending their lorries, and some doctors and nurses, to evacuate whatever remains of the hospitals in the city. But hurry up, if you want to go."

Then I began to hesitate. There was something in Gregory's voice that made me think of things I had not thought of before.

"Gregory," I said, "how is it there? Can one, I mean—can one remain there?"

"Would you dare yourself?" he looked at me sharply.

"I don't know," I said unhappily. "Are you going to?"

"No. But others do, you know."

"I'm going," I decided. "But I want to return."

"All right. We are to gather at Gate 5."

There was a crowd of people by the guardhouse of Gate 5 when Gregory and I reached there. Among the nurses I saw Stephania, a children's doctor, happy because she had found her fiancé. Maria was also there; she had once been one of the wealthiest women in Warsaw, who

had married three days before the Uprising and had not seen her husband since the outbreak of the fighting.

Accompanying the nurses and doctors were a few civilians. At first, this surprised me. I thought they had been granted some special favors by the Germans. But I soon discovered that they were Germans. Rumor had it they were industrialists from Germany who had come to survey the extent of the destruction of Warsaw.

We were handed passes which allowed us to move freely in Warsaw for a few hours, after our hospital work had been completed. We even hoped to get to our homes and take some of the most essential things, if we found any, back with us to the camp.

The heavy truck moved on. Gregory stood there with another doctor whom I had never seen at the camp before. He nodded to me, rather formally, and said: "May I introduce Dr. Zimny? He's going to Warsaw with us and probably will have to stay a few days there."

I nodded coldly, displeased with Gregory's rashness. "What did he say that for?" I fumed inwardly.

We entered Warsaw from the side of Wola, the same district through which I had passed some five weeks before when driven to the Pruszkow Camp. The stacks of corpses I had seen then still remained in the streets. Or were these perhaps new dead? Probably they were new, as we could see from a distance small bands of men in tattered civilian clothes busy digging large mass graves for the victims, and dragging the corpses away to bury them. These were the civilians detained by the Germans to serve as gravediggers for their own kin. Yes, these bodies I was seeing now must have been recently slain, I mused.

Long before we reached the hospital of our destination, we smelled the stench of decaying bodies. There was a cemetery by the hospital, but the dead were buried in very shallow graves there. Huge swarms of big blue-green

flies buzzed all around us, not too much disturbed by our arrival.

Chalubinski Street looked weird. There were some German posts there, and they built for themselves tents of beautiful Turkish rugs. Before one of these tents stood a black piano, its polished top carefully dusted off. A German private was sitting in front of the instrument, fingering the keys. As we came closer, the tune became clear, and we all shuddered. He was playing our own national anthem. Other Germans standing around the player roared with laughter, which did not echo amidst the mute runs of the houses.

We stayed at the hospital until noon, working hard and without letup. Then they gave us our lunch, a cup of ersatz coffee for each person and nothing else, and we understood why both the personnel and the patients of the hospital looked so very sick and emaciated. Shortly after this "lunch" they let us go to the city.

Outside of the hospital's doors we stood helplessly, not knowing where to go, and which of the streets, all littered with debris, were at all passable. We stood there, with heavy hearts. And then we plunged ahead, taking any ruined street on our way.

A few blocks beyond, on a corner, we ran into a group of workmen. They shouted at us to hurry up and cross to the other side of the street. We did. I was not quite sure which street we were on, for certain parts of Warsaw could no longer be recognized even by those who had spent a lifetime there. Without asking why, we ran to the ruins on the opposite side. Behind us came the roar of an explosion, frightful in the surrounding scene of death. The air shook, and the corpse of a building fell heavily where we had stood before. Warsaw had one more grave to hide the charred bodies of nameless people underneath.

One of the workers who had warned us now approached, and I stopped him.

"What was it? How did it happen? How did you know that house would fall?" I asked him

The man looked at me with eyes dulled by pain.

"You are not from Warsaw, then?"

"Yes. But I came from the Pruszkow Camp just now."

The man waved his hand toward the heap of ashes that was left where the ghost of the burned house had stood

"Our work," he said, through clenched teeth. "They make us destroy Warsaw totally and with our own hands"

"What do you mean?" I stammered.

"I'll show you," he said, and he turned away to go. I did not follow him at once, and so he stopped again to reassure me with a look. "I'll show you," he repeated. "Come along if you want to see it. I'll show you." The man's voice was beyond hysteria, for suffering was too deeply engraved upon him.

His was the "Second Group," I learned. The destruction had been organized with that German efficiency and thoroughness which we often had occasion to admire. Once the houses were looted and robbed of all their valuable objects, the "First Group" of workers, eight men, would be summoned to drill holes. The "Second Group" then came with explosives, and would attach a fuse with a long wire reaching into the courtyard of each battered house. To administer the *coup de grace*, there was the "Third Group" which would appear last, with torches and some inflammable mixture, to light the fuses and finish the work of demolition.

Warsaw had surrendered on October 2nd. On October 3rd the systematic destruction of whatever had been left standing in Warsaw had begun. From house to house, from street to street, the Germans drove their ill-fed slaves

to set the torch or to raze entire blocks, most of which could hardly ever be rebuilt. Yet, to our compatriots in the demolition squads, their work was like murdering their dearest friends.

I begged the workers to let me go into one of the doomed houses. I went upstairs while they planted in the basement the long sausages of explosives. The first-floor apartment was burned out. The second one, too. On the third floor the door to the apartment had been torn off its hinges and thrown on the marble staircase, forming something like a bridge into the hallway. The apartment itself had been destroyed but little. I stepped on the door and felt it wobble. There must be something underneath, I decided. There were rags heaped here and there, an old-fashioned photograph of a mustached man on the wall, a fancy coach for a baby doll, a little girl must have lived here, I concluded. Just then they called us from down below to come back. It was time for the "Third Group" to take over, it seemed.

"Let's do something about this door," I pleaded with one of the workmen, an engineer. "Let's just pick it up. Somehow I can't stand the thought of leaving it here."

The men bent down, without a word, to pick up the door. One of them, new on the job, stumbled against a brick and fell on what seemed like a heap of debris. Suddenly, he screamed hysterically, and jumped to his feet, shaking. He had fallen on the charred body of a woman, covered with brick dust. The other men looked on quietly. They had seen worse things. The woman's corpse, one of countless thousands, would soon be buried under a mound of rubble with the demolition of the house. In a few minutes, when we were but a short distance away, the big apartment building blew up and collapsed.

On Towarowa Street, a brand-new pole attracted our attention. A large poster hung from it. In striking, bold,

red letters against a background of white, it read in Polish

"Poles! Look around you and think What you are seeing is the result of your own naive credulity You chose to believe in England, in America and in Soviet Russia, the tyrants of the world Had you gone with us, you would not have been betrayed so basely or suffered so much Your Allies have put a knife to your throat. Poles! It is high time you awakened!"

On Hoza Street, the red corpse of a trolley car, once used by the Home Army in the foundation of a barricade, was sprawled, its dead wires hanging loose. On Sikorski Avenue, on top of Warsaw's bloodiest barricade, the Germans had replaced the red and white banner of Poland with a red flag displaying the Swastika in the center.

A German was coming toward us on a bicycle, and we moved aside instinctively. He was from the Gestapo, an officer As he passed close by me, I heard him mutter in Polish, as if talking to himself: "Damn the drunken swine! Before an officer's inspection, too."

His was a pure Warsaw accent, and I could not restrain an impulse.

"Wait a moment," I said loudly

The Gestapo officer stopped and looked at me over his shoulder.

"Why did you swear so?" I asked, studying his face. No, it was no one I knew.

"I don't like my soldiers to get drunk when they know I am coming for an inspection," he answered indignantly, but without showing surprise at my intrusion.

"What soldiers?"

"Mine, of course."

"Germans?" I asked, more curious than cautious.

"And what others?" he answered. And then he grinned.

"You speak Polish so well," I observed hesitantly.

"I am from Warsaw, myself," he answered. We were like two persons reaching for one another in a big, dark house, stretching out their hands, unwilling to move forward for fear of making a wrong step that might lead to calamity.

"Do you want a pass or something I could give you?" the Gestapo officer said, and I felt that he was one of our men.

"No, thank you. We came here to evacuate the hospitals. Our papers are in order."

"Just as you wish," he answered indifferently, and put his foot on the pedal. Was he what he seemed to be? I wondered. The Gestapo-man saluted as he started, and said: "I won't be wearing this uniform long. Shortly, it'll be the proper one." And he was gone.

New seeds of vengeance and of battle had sprouted already amidst the ruins of Warsaw, seeds which no fires could burn out.

My pilgrimage through the cemetery that was Warsaw went on. The only inhabitants I encountered were wild cats and emaciated dogs. The Germans would shoot them on sight. Here there was a tiny pillow of dainty lace, there a doll with wide-open eyes lay on the top of a pile of debris.

I stopped at one of the barricades on Koszykowa Street, where the beautiful city library used to stand. I edged my way into the narrow opening of a primitive pillbox, and sat down in the place once occupied by our sharpshooter. The earth, amidst the torn-out blocks of the sidewalk, was humid, and I thought it was humid with the blood of those who had defended this post. I saw something small and shiny lying half-buried there, and picked it up. It was a small icon I knew well: Our Lady of the Insurgents. I wiped it off automatically with the hem of my dress, half-surprised that there were no traces of blood on me. But then, this was October 16th, fourteen days after the fight-

ing had stopped. The good earth had had time to swallow up the blood.

I was to return to the camp on another lorry, with a different party. The officer who was arranging for my transportation was a Ukrainian, but he spoke almost flawless Polish. While waiting for the final permission of his colonel to take off for Pruszkow, he explained: "We are now loading the National Library and some paintings, to save them from destruction. They'll burn and raze everything here," he sighed.

I sat on a pile of rubble and waited for the colonel. Then I saw the Ukrainian coming back toward me, leading a higher officer and helping him at the more difficult crossings. I was clutching my pass. The colonel examined it carefully. "A matter of red tape merely," he said politely. He was handing my pass back to me when down the street the tall, dark figure of a man emerged. He was stooped and wore a black civilian overcoat.

I looked at the tall, thin man. He was climbing a huge mound of debris, moving up and up, slowly, with difficulty, and yet purposefully and with determination. Spontaneously I started for that mountain of debris, and then I ran, for I was sure already, coming a little closer, that the man was Christopher, my leader, my commander, the man who had drawn me into the ranks of the Underground, the brilliant surgeon from the Uyazdov Hospital, the man whom I admired and loved more than anyone else I had ever come in touch with. Christopher, General Christopher. God was good if He had let Christopher live. God was kind and merciful.

I ran toward him, tears streaming down my face. I had no time to wipe them off or to rebuke myself for crying at all when I should have been so happy.

I was now but a few steps away from him, but he still did not see me. I could wait no longer; I seized his hand

and called "Dr. Christopher! Christopher!" and then I caught myself and stuck my fist in my mouth, not to cry out his name too loudly

From the far end of the street, they were shouting something to me, but I paid no heed. I clasped Christopher's hand. It stayed meekly in mine, lifeless and limp.

"General," I implored "General Christopher!"

The tall man stopped. He looked at me. Then he shook his head. When he finally spoke, his voice sounded dull and queer.

"Who are you?" he asked.

I shivered. He had known me so well. He had been kind to me so many times, offering encouragement and praise. He had trusted me.

"It's I, Doctor . . . It's I, Aneri. Don't you recognize me?" My voice was breaking with the terrible urgency of the moment, with shock and with fright.

"I don't know you," Christopher said, and his eyes did not see me.

"But you do! I am Aneri. You know me. I have worked with you ever since 1939."

Christopher shook his head. Then he rubbed his forehead.

"Oh, yes, yes . . . Of course," he said. "Of course, I remember you. I am glad to see you before I leave for Krakow."

"Before you leave?"

It began to dawn on me then, but I could not believe it. Not Christopher, no. It was impossible, he could not have gone mad. Not Christopher.

"Yes, leaving," he said, still in that queer, small voice. "Leaving for Krakow. We are evacuating our hospital there, didn't you know?" And he waved his hand.

His hospital? But I had seen the pitiful remains of his hospital brought to the Pruszkow Camp. I had talked with

his own assistant. Without looking, Christopher started climbing again. I caught him by the hand.

"I have seen your nephew in the Pruszkow Camp. He went to Krakow, too," I said quickly.

Christopher stopped for a second.

"A nephew, I have no . . . oh, yes . . . Please tell him that his entire family has been murdered."

He began to climb again. I heard the colonel's shouts and saw his aide, the Ukrainian lieutenant, coming towards me. Again I seized Christopher's hand.

"Please go with me, Doctor," I spoke rapidly. "I'm going to Krakow, too. Please, come with me! We'll work together again."

Christopher freed himself gently. He raised his hand, showed me the desolate runs all around us, and went on without a word. But then he turned his head toward me and said in this new dull voice of his: "Remember!"

He looked upward again, toward heaven, as he climbed to the top of the heap of debris and began to disappear, the smoke of the smothered fires enveloping him as in a fog.

The colonel's aide pulled at my sleeve and urged me to go back to the lorry.

Christopher vanished. I was leaving Warsaw, for how long I knew not. And all I saw were smouldering ruins, decaying bodies and the upturned bowels of the earth rich with the blood of those who had loved too well and fought too hard to live.

The motor of the heavy lorry growled. Once more I turned back to see the ruins of the city that had fought so stubbornly for its death and for its glory, heedless of those to whom the words "justice," "alliance" or "brotherhood" were mere slogans. The stumps of the dead houses of the dead city I was leaving behind me pointed heavenwards, like the arms of the cross on which the God-Man had once died unjustly, and verily for those who had crucified Him.

POSTSCRIPT

From Camp Pruszkow, upon my return from Warsaw, I was transferred on October 26th to a newly established hospital camp at Piastow. Here I was assigned to serve as a nurse. As the Russian advance developed, this camp at Piastow was about to be evacuated, with its personnel, to Germany.

I secured a "safe conduct" pass from the Piastow administration on November 5th, and made use of it during the confusion attending the German retreat to flee with Barbarka to Krakow where we remained in hiding for some months.

I left Poland as the wife of an American citizen and proceeded to the United States on the exchange ship "Gripsholm." Barbarka and I landed in New York on February 21st, 1945.